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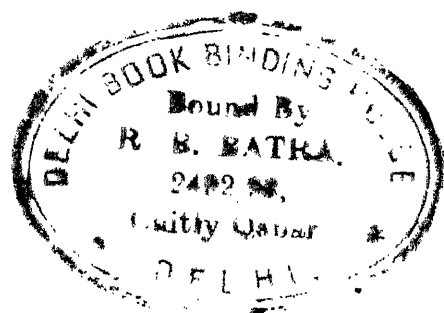
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# MAN IN INDIA



*A Quarterly Record of Anthropological  
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# MAN IN INDIA

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## COMMENT

IN THIS number we present a short view of Indian folk-poetry. Hitherto this subject has been shunned by ethnologists and, if we except the few caste poems included by Russell and Hiralal in their *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces* and the poems in the works of Sarat Chandra Roy, there are scarcely any books earlier than the last ten years which deal at all with the poetry of village and jungle India. Yet nothing could be more relevant to Indian anthropology. For only through its songs do the attitudes of a tribe or caste become clear and it is not until the poetry has been understood that a tribe is understood.

For presenting this poetry for scientific scrutiny, certain requisites are obvious. In the first place, the poems must be given in translation. To present them merely as originals might excite the linguist but it would baffle the scholar whose area of investigation may be different and who needs a common denominator for equating his material. With the multiplicity of Indian tongues translation is the only way by which a whole view of Indian poetry can be reached. At the same time, the originals are of the very greatest importance. With its original, a translation becomes authentic. Its accuracy can be tested. Its function becomes clear. Without its original its value is in doubt. No one can say whether the poem is more of the translator than of the tribe. There is, therefore, no question whether the originals should be printed. The only question is how the originals and translations can best be combined.

To this question we would give an unequivocal answer. We believe that little is gained by printing originals side by side with their translations. Those

who can test the translations will be few. They are the tiny minority who serve the vital function of upholding truth. Those who can relish the poetry may be many, and for these, poetry should either be printed *as poetry* or it should not be printed at all. To make a linguistic puzzle a necessary pendant to a poem is to rob it of almost all its power and charm. The best method, therefore, is to print the originals as a separate publication and to supply the translations with a finding list. Such a course not only provides the critic with a stick but if care is taken it may also give the poems back to the people. We suggest that at a time when oral traditions are weakening all over India this is a gesture which no anthropologist should grudge. In this number, we have accordingly omitted all originals, but wherever possible have indicated a printed source. Where the originals are as yet unpublished, we have tried to make clear their present position.

If translations are to be of value, it is obvious that they should conform to certain standards. The most evident is that the translation should itself be a poem. If it is not a poem, if it does not create the effect of poetry, it is merely a degradation of its original, an act of murder. The second requisite is that the translation should correspond with the original. If it does not correspond, it loses all claim to scientific value. It ceases to be the translation of a poem. It becomes a poem by a translator. Such a poem may have value as poetry but it has none at all as science. The problem of translating Indian folk poetry is in essentials how to produce a version which contains all the elements both of poetry and science.

It will be evident that to this problem no solutions will be perfect. A poem is a combination of certain images, certain rhythms and certain effects of music, and only if a translation could provide an exact parallel for each of these elements could it be perfect. In actual fact, a translation from a tribal language into

English can parallel only one of these elements. Differences of verbal structure are so great that if parallel images are retained, the rhythms will be different. If the rhythms are maintained, the images will suffer, while no form of English can reproduce the musical effects of Hindi, Uraon, Gondi, or Mundari. 'Certain things', said Ezra Pound, 'are translatable from one language to another, a tale or an image will translate; music will practically never translate.' A translation becomes possible, therefore, only when there is no attempt at all at *complete* correspondence.

We believe that the best solution so far reached is that of Arthur Waley. In translating from the Chinese Arthur Waley was faced with problems which are identical with those of Indian languages. His solution has been a series of versions<sup>1</sup> in which the literal meaning of the translation corresponds with the literal meaning of the original. In particular, the images are never added to and never subtracted from. The poem as a system of images remains in translation what it is in the original. Instead, however, of attempting a duplication of rhyme, rhythm, or music, his versions use the rhythms and sound effects which come most naturally to the English. The original form is abandoned and instead the effort is to create a new form which is valid for a contemporary sensibility. We believe that in terms of this solution translations of Indian folk-poetry can preserve all the elements essential for anthropology while still retaining all the ingredients of poetry. It is by these standards that we suggest that the following anthology of poems may be judged.

W. G. ARCHER.

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<sup>1</sup> 170 *Chinese Poems* (Constable, 1918), *More Translations from the Chinese* (Allen and Unwin, 1919), *The Temple and other Poems* (Allen and Unwin, 1923), *The Book of Songs* (Allen and Unwin, 1937).

# A SHORT ANTHOLOGY OF INDIAN FOLK-POETRY

## ASSAM

### *An Ao Naga Song*

*A flying squirrel falls in love with a bird. The man begins in the character of the squirrel and the girl sings the bird's part in reply.*

*The squirrel sings—*

From far Lungkungchang  
All the long road to Chongliyimti  
Have I come to where my beloved sleeps  
I am handsome as a flower, and when I am with my beloved  
May dawn linger long below the world's edge.

*The bird replies—*

Countless suitors come to the house where I sleep  
But in this lover only, handsome as a flower  
Do mine eyes behold the ideal of my heart  
Many came to the house where I sleep  
But the joy of my eyes was not among them  
My lover is like the finest bead  
On the necks of all the men of all the world  
When my lover comes not to where I sleep  
Ugly and hateful to my eyes is my chamber.

J. P. MILLS

### *Two Rengma Naga Songs*

I

I have been given in marriage to a stranger  
That girl has her relations round her  
But I am like a flower all alone  
If I could have worked in the home fields  
I should have been happy  
But they would not leave me to work in the field I loved  
I have come far over the hills to work in a strange village  
Even when I was on my way  
I begged them not to send me  
Girlhood and strength to work come twice to none.

## II

*Woman :* I have married a man with polished earrings  
He cuts bamboo cups for the helpers.

*Man :* I have married a girl whose beads are the best in  
the company  
She offers dishes of food to all the helpers.

*Woman :* I am not strong. Do not be angry at my light  
load  
You are beautiful as a rhododendron bud and a  
red berry.

J. P. MILLS

### *A Lhota Naga Song*

*The recruiting of the Lhotas for the Naga Labour Corps in the last war, and their service in France and return, were celebrated in song at Pangti.*

O Hutton Sahib, young man of a foreign race  
What is that letter which has come to you from abroad ?  
O Hutton Sahib, young man of a foreign race  
The letter you got so quickly  
Is it to call us to go to the German War ?  
Look how in every village  
The bucks plan each with his friend to go  
O we will go to the German War  
Let not a word of the letter fall fruitless  
We men of the Mountains, we the bucks  
Have routed the enemies of the Sahib  
Let us return quickly, us the braves of the Mountains  
Let our women-folk at home hear the news  
Let them hear that we have routed the enemies of the Sahib  
We braves of the Mountains are coming back  
Let our women-folk at home hear the news  
Let them meet us with drinks of *madhu*  
Bid them come and meet us on the road  
Tell our two Sahibs to send word to them  
They have given us money as countless as the grains of ash  
on the hearth  
But he who gives thought to it  
Only he will keep his money.

J. P. MILLS



*Two Angami Naga Songs*

## I

From youth on let there be no parting  
 I will wait by the path to watch  
 I gaze at that fairest one from afar  
 When her hair is long and bound up  
 Let her remain my friend and go to the fields with me  
 Then will I wait for her at dawn  
 I will take her beyond the others  
 I will return alone by way of Sorozhu  
 Then am I lonely by myself. Send her word of it  
 In the sky the moon is rising, the sun-god has set  
 The moonlight is shining down on me  
 On our favourite path through the village  
 After death we can tread it no longer  
 By the stone of Ketsorr  
 Let us pluck off heads of grass and caress one another  
 Thus shall I possess her.  
 We will pour our cups into one gourd  
 We will go ahead of the spiteful  
 We will not hide our love.

## II

Though the villages are separated the herds graze together  
 Upon the ridge there is a great stone to sit on  
 Do you go there ? I will go there too  
 Your three suitors are at the well  
 They are picking up stones and dancing  
 Of all women you are the most beautiful  
 Your skin is fair and there are brass earrings in your ears  
 The little boys are gathered in the morung  
 But you have your true-love's name ever on your lips  
 And I am ashamed to remain in your presence  
 All men love you, Lozorewu  
 Every part of your person is beautiful.

J. H. HUTTON

*Four Lakher Songs*

## I

*The young men sing :*

O my love let me fondle your breasts  
 I am burning to marry you  
 But I have no money to pay your price

*The girls sing :*

You cannot fondle me just for fun  
I am keeping myself  
For the man I shall love and marry.

*The young men sing :*

Do not refuse me thus, I love you so  
Who is to know  
If I fondle you just once for remembrance?

*The girls sing :*

I also love you very much  
But you must first pay my price to my parents  
And marry me  
And then we will sleep on one pillow

## II

Let a soft breeze blow  
And waft across the hill to me  
The scent of my loved one  
To enlighten my work.

## III

Have you ever seen a bison with bright horns  
Shining like ripe plantains  
When you have been pursuing game in the jungle?

## IV

I, a poor brotherless man  
All by myself have slain a wild beast  
Beneath the flowers of the chestnut tree  
I am weeping for joy, O Thanglunga.

N. E. PARRY

## BASTAR STATE

### *A Muria Leja or Love Song*

Leja, leja, O dear vine, take my one-stringed fiddle  
To the flooded river, plunge in and play with it.  
Leja, leja, O sliced gourd, in the long days that have passed  
Since I last saw you, you have grown plump and lovely.  
Rain has fallen and fallen, the pond is brimming. But, dear one,  
Do not touch me, for my heart jumps to see you.

We have been separated long, too long, my darling,  
And now, leja, O leja, we must live together.  
Beloved, I'm carried away by the pock-mark on your dark, shining  
face,

By the glossy hair on your dear head.

Throw a fiddle at the plum-tree, and the fruit will fall.

But who will soften the Englishman to the tale of our love ?

My tender fern, he is not our own Bastar-born king

Who would listen to our tale, and you would walk before him

In your loveliness, and melt him to sympathy !

Leja, leja, O wild berry, would you leave me ?

Leja, leja, though, wealth of my heart, I know

That you are not mine, nor for me to touch, yet

Leja, O leja, desire will flare in your heart ;

Will you come then for a while to my house ?

Leja, leja, O wealth of my heart, the summer rains

Have soaked the fields, the rains of June.

My heart blazes with passion, my flower

(Let go my loin-cloth a moment ; the white girl is coming).

Leja, leja, sweet bug of my bed, what have you done to me ?

I see you, and all our past love leaps to remembrance.

Why though you snuggle do you struggle, why cry and try

To keep yourself back, though I've tumbled you down ?

Leja, leja, give in, give in, shining brow,

Or, by the Mother ! my love will become hate.

Leja, leja, O wealth of my heart, the summer rains

Have soaked the fields, the rains of June

My heart blazes with passion, my flower !

(Let go my loin-cloth a moment ; the white girl is coming).

Leja, leja, sweet saunterer, leja, O love,

Lend me your jewels, for me to go to Jagdalpur fair.

Leja, leja, O love, you will remember your promise,

For as the deer leaves tracks, I have left an itch in your body,

And I shall learn how to tell the English ruler about you.

The wild beans and berries have dried up under the hill,

But your memory came fresh there to me at night,

And I could not sleep, leja, O leja !

Ye, de, O little goldfish, O shining brow,

Do not cry over what happened last night ;

Leja, leja, come, dear vine, let us enjoy ourselves first

And then, if you will, tell the foreigner

The rain is falling, sweet bug of my bed,

Why should I listen to your silly pleading ?

Why are you striving and crying, pulling and pushing ?

You'll be all right, yes, you'll be all right.

There, there, sweet bug of my bed, dear wild berry,

Lend me your plough and bullocks,

And I will sow a crop of maize.

Leja, leja, re leja re, who will play my one-stringed fiddle ?

All night I thought about you. Come and plunge and play in my pool !

I will play with you, as a shuttle flashes through the warps of a loom

Listen, O listen to the pouring rain of June.

The wild beans and berries have gone dry under the hill,

And you tell me to sing to you about God.

God is everywhere in the world ; but your singer,

Your singer, my flower, is with you in Bastar.

Leja, re leja, re leja-re, sweet saunterer, my berry, my plaintain-vine,

You know, one who walks on the edge of Gangamoonda lake

Is bogged in the mud ; but that mud is the place

For sowing rice seeds, leja, leja, O leja !

Ye, de, burn, my berry, burn, my only jewel,

And think and long for the night.

The tall plaintain-vine bears a fine cluster of fruit.

Be ready for me, dear bug of my bed, comb

And decorate your hair, my only jewel, for to-morrow

Desire will fire me and I shall come back to you.

W. V. GRIGSON

### *Five Bhattra Songs*

#### I

White flower

There is none like you

From a great crowd

I choose you.

#### II

O lovely girl

The flowers grow quickly

And we who once were small

Are ready now for love.

#### III

O girl with swaying hips

The plough goes straight across the field

And I will come for you

Who have hidden many days.

## IV

The parrot has eaten  
 The green karmata fruit  
 O the wings of the golden bird !  
 Those days are gone.

## V

Heavily pours the rain  
 The water comes along the eaves  
 The girls are eating frogs' eggs  
 The red calf is never weary  
 As I was digging, Malko  
 I found a mouse's hole.

VERRIER ELWIN

BIHAR AND CHOTANAGPUR

*Twenty Uraon Poems of the Ranchi District*

SARHUL

I

A crab has bitten you, girl  
 Who will tend you ?  
 Your *juri* is not here  
 Who will tend you ?

II

Bitten by a crab, girl  
 Who will dress it for you ?  
 Your husband is away in Bhutan  
 Who will dress it for you ?

KARAM

III

A crab has bitten you, girl,  
 Who will save you  
 Who will save you ?  
 Your husband has gone to a foreign land  
 Who will save you, girl ?  
 You will fret in your heart  
 Who will save you ?

## IV

I went to pick flowers, mother,  
But I am coming with an empty basket  
When they will ask for flowers  
What shall I offer them and  
What shall I not ?

## V

You went to pick flowers, girl  
But you yielded to the tiger's den  
In the tiger's den  
You struggle and tumble.

## VI

You went to pick flowers, girl  
But you yielded to the crab's hole  
The crab caught you  
Who will free you ?  
Your boy is in the other land  
Who will save you ?

## VII

Girl, you went to pick flowers  
But the crab hole tempted you  
Now you are struggling  
Struggling in the crab hole.

## VIII

You went to pick a flower, girl  
But the flower was faded  
When you were in your parent's house  
How lovely were the flowers then.

## IX

You set out for the *Karam*  
But the den of the tiger lured you  
In the crab's hole you tumble a girl  
In the crab's hole you rock with her.

## X

Girl, you went to pick flowers  
And dallied in the crab hole  
Young men, you set out for the *Karam*  
And dallied in the tiger's den.

## XI

Cowherd boy  
 Why do you cut a flute ?  
 The cow does not come  
 And so I cut a flute  
 Cow  
 Why do you wait ?  
 The grass does not sprout  
 And so I wait  
 Grass  
 Why do you not spring up ?  
 The rain does not fall  
 And so I do not sprout  
 Rain  
 Why do you keep away ?  
 The frog does not call  
 And so I do not come  
 Frog  
 Why do you not cry ?  
 The snake does not bite me  
 And so I do not cry  
 Snake  
 Why do you not bite him ?  
 Its wail of pain  
 Winds in the ear  
 And so I do not bite.

## CHIRDI

## XII

The girls you were dancing with  
 You have let your girls go  
 Will your time last, boy ?  
 In the morning you have let them go  
 Will your time last ?

## XIII

You are ploughing crooked  
 Through talking with that girl  
 You are ploughing in the morning  
 But in the night you talk to her.

## XIV

Do not dance behind me  
My heart is sad without my girl  
In the morning she is dancing, girl,  
How sad I feel without my girl.

## XV

As long as you are unmarried  
How smart you keep yourself  
When you are old, girl,  
All your looks will go  
You are smart in the morning  
But your looks will go.

## DOMKACH

## XVI

Girl, if you'll stay  
I'll give you a dress  
Boy, I will give you  
The words of my mouth.

## ASARI

## XVII

Little the hut  
And to the east the door  
And all night through the water drips  
I have no father  
I have no mother  
Who will mend my home?

## XVIII

A girl is going  
With parrot feathers  
Look at her this way  
Look at her that way  
With her parrot feathers.

## XIX

Little and you'll buy a drum  
Bigger and you'll buy a wife  
You'll buy a wife and gaze at her  
And dance with her  
And your drum you'll cast aside.



## XX

The modern man, mother  
 Does not care if a girl is his younger brother's wife  
 In the day time  
 He acts like a husband's elder brother  
 In the night time  
 He acts like the husband himself.  
 Oh yes I know the ways of youth.<sup>1</sup>

W. G. ARCHER.

*Seventeen Kayesth Poems of the Shahabad District*

## SEHALA

## I

Bridegroom with the red beads  
 The red beads  
 Wearer of a red fringe  
 Bridegroom  
 Bridegroom with the red beads  
 The red beads.

## II

The head of the bridegroom  
 Shines with a turban  
 The bride charms  
 With a small pomegranate  
 Camp in the garden  
 Halt in the grove  
 The mouth of the bridegroom  
 Is bright with *pan*  
 The teeth of the bride  
 Flash with black powder  
 The body of the bridegroom  
 Is grand in his dress  
 The bride charms  
 With the slip for her breasts  
 The bride adorns  
 The bridegroom's bed  
 The bride dazzles  
 With the maid of the bridegroom.

<sup>1</sup> For details of the different forms, see *The Blue Grove* and *Lil Khora Khekhel*. In poems I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, IX and X the crab and tiger are symbols for a lover. Similarly, 'picking flowers' is a sexual image. The crab hole in the Sirasita fields in Barwe (Gumla subdivision) is the mythical home of the Uraon tribe, the humble dwelling where the first Uraon brother and sister lived.

## III

Pass through the *mali's* alley, O bridegroom  
And higgie for the marriage hat  
O you prince of a bridegroom  
The *malin* is a lovely girl.  
O princely bridegroom  
And the bridegroom is a lotus bloom  
O you prince of a bridegroom.

## IV

The father gets ready  
A set of wedding clothes  
The sister's husband  
Gets ready another  
Look at the walk of the lovely bridegroom  
Look at his lovely face.

## Jog

## V

Shine on the *tika*  
Shine on the pearls,  
On this lucky night, O moon  
Shine in the sky  
On this bridal night, O moon  
Shine in the sky  
On this night of the bridegroom  
Shine, O moon.

## VI

Fish of the Makhdum pond  
Come into the river and stream  
Yes, into the river and stream  
O mother, my charm  
What sort of girl  
Enchants my son  
Enchants my son ?  
O mother, my charm  
What lovely boy  
Casts his net  
Casts his net  
O mother, my charm.

## JHUMAR

## VII

In a golden dish I set the food  
But she powders her teeth and does not eat it  
That lovely one  
Powders her teeth in a mirror  
In a golden jar I brought Ganges water  
But she powders her teeth and does not drink it  
That lovely one  
Powders her teeth in a mirror.

## VIII

In a golden dish she placed the food  
But he did not eat it  
She weeps and weeps  
And her eyes are red  
You should have helped me to eat; O lovely one  
For now it is you I have to help  
She weeps and weeps  
And her eyes are red.

## IX

Throughout the night he drives a car  
In a gold dish I set his food  
Eat it, you motor man, my darling  
In a gold jar is Ganges water  
Drink it, you motor man, my darling.

## X

Without a light I cannot go to bed  
How lovely you look with your red line and your pearls  
From Bhagalpur a whore comes  
From Gorakhpur comes her lover  
Without a light I cannot go to bed.

## XI

Throw a rope and scale the wall, my darling  
To the door comes the lover  
But the dog of the house barks  
He enters the court  
But the scorpion of the house stings him  
Throw a rope and scale the wall, my darling  
He lies on the bed and the ants of the house bite him  
Throw a rope and scale the wall, my darling.

## TAPA

## XII

Grand is the bridge of Benares  
Where sits an old woman  
And an old man flirts  
Grand is the bridge of Benares  
Where sits a young woman  
And the gangster flirts  
Grand is the bridge of Benares  
Where sits a girl  
And the boys make love  
Grand is the bridge of Benares  
Where squats the pretty whore  
And the gangster eyes her.

## GAJAL

## XIII

Darling I am giving myself to you  
Let go of the sari on my breasts  
I will let it go  
On the road where the motors pass  
I will let it go  
On the railway line  
I will let it go  
At the well where the women gather  
I will let it go  
In the garden where the flowers are planted  
I will let it go  
On the bed of your darling where lovers have their sport.

## XIV

Darling in the shade of my jhulani  
You pass the noon  
Four months lasts the heat.  
Sweat trickles from my slips  
And you waive a pretty fan above me  
Four months the rain falls  
Drip drop drip drop  
Oh make me a house of love  
Four months lasts the cold  
And how the heart shivers  
Oh put your arm round my neck.

## XV

That lovely girl is out to make trouble  
 And soon will my heart be ruled with cares  
 Soon shall I have a secret with her  
 O do not walk like a flirt,  
 Mincing at every step  
 Watching you walk is the death of the world  
 Sometimes you say yes and sometimes no  
 And only for a kiss we bicker.

## XVI

Darling, open your body  
 And if I look, what of it ?  
 Let me hear your pretty voice  
 If I hear, what of it ?  
 Give me a dish of love  
 And if I eat  
 What of it ?

## KAJALI

## XVII

Often the peacock cries  
 And the *papiha* calls  
 My lover has not come  
 And the clouds gather  
 Often the clouds thunder  
 And the lightning glitters  
 My lover has not come  
 And the clouds gather  
 My lover has not come  
 And my heart is scared  
 And the clouds gather<sup>1</sup>.

W. G. ARCHER

---

<sup>1</sup> Poems I-XII are sung at marriages. *Sehala* songs are sung in the boy's house before his departure for the wedding and particularly just after he has put his wedding garments on. *Sehala* is the tasselled fringe on a marriage crown. *Jog* songs are sung from the day the bride and bridegroom are anointed with *haldi* up to the wedding day, the period when they are in greatest danger from the evil eye and from evil spirits. *Jhumar* and *Tapa* songs are sung for entertainment throughout the wedding period. Poems XIII-XVI (*Gajal*) are sung for amusement any time in the year, while Poem XVII (*Kajali*) is a poem of the Rains.

## BOMBAY

*Sixteen Marathi Grinding Songs*

## I

Rise, my companions, for the dawn grinding:  
The star of Venus stands above our heads.

## II

In the dawn one should fold one's hands in the courtyard:  
As one looks down, the sun rolls up into the sky.

## III

The rain falls, sister ; the clouds thunder and thunder  
The farmer like a king rejoicing begins to sow his land.

## IV

The rain fell much, thinking only of play;  
But in the banker's garden the gardening women were wet.

## V

The moon made her a halo with the light of the stars:  
The sun made him a halo brighter by far.

## VI

A black butterfly comes and goes in my courtyard:  
She shakes the leaves of my tender sabja.

## VII

To fly away from here, so wishes my heart :  
To go to a wild and there a fawn to fondle.

## VIII

To the bazaar I took my joy and sorrow:  
My joy found a buyer, but none would take my sorrow.

## IX

I tell not my secrets to my neighbours:  
I tell them to the stars and birds.

## X

Full noon, a comely wench is at the spring,  
And from his horse a thirsty rider asks to drink.

## XI

On the banks of the river sat the youths  
Casting their wily nets: fish have no wisdom.

## XII

This gadding wench sits here, sits there:  
Says she to her man: What about our dinner?

## XIII

The rains fell, the thorns sprang up:  
They made me think of fools' talk.

## XIV

How shall I tell you, Bai, the wonders of the humble?  
Foes became friends; all armies were disbanded.

## XV

I pull my mill like a running deer:  
My mother's milk plays in my wrists.  
Let us talk secrets—we need no lamp:  
In the door is the air of the stars, my mother.

## XVI

My fair sister, so fair thou art,  
Thy calves are as the hearts of plantains.

MARY FULLER

## THE CENTRAL PROVINCES

### *Ten Gond Poems*

## I

SAJANI

In all the world a village is the place for happiness  
In every house are ploughs and bullocks  
And everyone goes farming  
When the villagers are working in the fields  
It looks like a festival  
With the consent of all, the fields are sown  
They are fenced with thorns to keep the jackals away  
Slowly, steadily, the rain fills the tanks and wells and hollows  
While the clouds thunder through the air and frighten us out  
of our wits

Some sing Dadaria : some dance the Salla : those who are  
grazing cattle play on the bamboo flute  
After the ploughing the fields are thick with mud, but the  
women dance as they sow the rice  
Friends play, throwing mud at one another  
Some are smoking; some are chewing *pān* ; some who are idle  
sit gaping at the workers; while others sing  
In all the world a village is the place for happiness.

## II

## SAILA

O Ahirin, your cow has escaped from the cowshed  
She puts sandal-blossom in her hair, and wanders through the  
village  
O Ahirin, your cow has run out of the courtyard  
She puts sandal-blossom in her hair, and wanders through the  
village  
O Ahirin, your cow has gone into the jungle  
With a stick in her hand, she has followed her cow to the  
jungle.

## III

## KARMA

In our court the well is deep  
The water bubbles up from hell  
O mother, the silken rope is broken  
The bucket has fallen down  
So why should I go for water  
What need have I for a pitcher  
Why must such a pretty girl go to fetch water ?  
In our court the well is deep  
The mouth of the well is narrow  
The water is down deep as hell.

## IV

In the month of Sravan lightly falls the rain  
But in Bhadon it pours down in torrents  
O how I long to see my beloved  
But between us flows the flooded river  
If I had a little boat, I would cross the river in it  
And when I reached his house, I would sleep in his arms  
But when I long to see him, the river is in flood.



## V

Gently, gently, falls the rain  
 In the courtyard moss has gathered  
 A little orphan girl has slipped on it  
 The old mother has run to catch her  
 But she has caught hold of the branch of the mango tree.

## VI

In the court a dog is barking  
 In the house a cat is mewling  
 And your voice from the top of the hill  
 Sounds like a phadki bird  
 Or a dove adorned with diamonds and emeralds  
 Many letters have I written to you  
 But never have I had an answer.

## VII

The stars are thundering in the sky  
 Among the anthills the cobra roars  
 Under the earth the cobra's mate is nodding  
 And the eagle dances across the sky.

## VIII

Your body might have come from the loins of a prince  
 Lovely are you as the milky heart of a coconut  
 Your body captures the mind with its beauty  
 And my life lives within your life  
 In the dark clouds there are nine lacs of stars  
 The sun and the moon have begun to sink  
 And you have come instead as moon of the earth.

## IX

## DADARIA

As I lay on my bed  
 I was bitten by the bugs  
 All night I lay awake  
 Thinking of you.

## X

It is evening now  
 The dark-breasted quail have flown away  
 Come, for it is the hour of love.

SHAMRAO HIVALE and VERRIER ELWIN

*Twenty-four Murha Dadaria*

## I

Our mother Narbadda is very kind  
Blow, wind, we are hot with labour.

## II

He said to the Maina  
Go, carry my message to my love.

## III

The red-ants climb up the mango tree  
And the daughter follows her mother's way.

## IV

I have no money to give her even lime and tobacco  
I am poor, so how how can I tell her of my love.

## V

The boat has gone down on the flood of the Narbadda  
The fisher-woman is weeping for her husband.

## VI

She has no bangles on her arm nor necklace on her neck.  
She has no beauty, but seeks her lovers throughout the village.

## VII

Bread from the girdle, curry from the lota  
Let us go, beloved, the moon is shining.

## VIII

The leaves of gram have been plucked from the plants  
I think much on Dadaria, but she does not come.

## IX

The love of a stranger is as a dream  
Think not of him, beloved, he cannot be yours.

## X

Twelve has struck and it is thirteen time  
Oh, overseer, let your poor labourers go.

## XI

The betel-leaf is pressed in the mouth  
Attractive eyes delight the heart.

## XII

Catechu, areca and black cloves  
My heart's secret troubles me in my dreams.

## XIII

The Narbadda came and swept away the rubbish  
Fly away, bees, do not perch on my cloth.

## XIV

The colour does not come on the wheat  
Her youth is passing, but she cannot yet drape her cloth on  
her body.

## XV

Like the sight of rain-drops splashing on the ground  
So beautiful is she to look upon.

## XVI

It rains and the hidden streams in the woodland are filled  
Hide as long as you may, some day you must be seen.

## XVII

The mahua flowers are falling from the trees on the hill,  
Leave me your cloth so that I may know you will return.

## XVIII

He went to the bazaar and brought back a coconut  
It is green without, but insects are eating the core.

## XIX

He went to the hill and cut strings of bamboo  
You cannot drape your cloth, you have wound it round your  
body.

## XX

The Narbadda flows like a bent bow,  
A beautiful youth is standing in the court.

## XXI

The broken areca-nuts cannot be mended.  
And two hearts which are sundered cannot be joined.

## XXII

Ask me for five rupees and I will give you twenty-five  
But I will not give my lover for the whole world.

## XXIII

Break the bangles which your husband gave you  
And put others on your wrist in my name.

## XXIV

O my lover, give me bangles, make me armlets  
For I am content with you.

R. V. RUSSELL and HIRALAL

*Ten Baiga Poems*

## I

O my *bhauji*, listen, though I am inconstant  
I am loved by those who care to love  
Listen, give your ear, my *bhauji*, I would sleep with you  
How I want to love you; clasp me to your breast.

## II

In Sravan the rain drenches us with water  
My young *dewar* is combing my wet hair  
And now he spreads his hands over my young body.

## III

Near the bed a lamp is burning  
Look, look, he is with his *bhauji*  
A-re-re! A-re-re! My *dewar* is enjoying me  
He has torn my jacket.

## IV

O my love, drink as much water as you can  
And enjoy me  
As much as anyone could enjoy in all his lifetime.

## V

Cut a green bamboo  
 Pull off the bark  
 Get a bed ready  
 A bed with four legs  
 At midnight there's a lovely girl  
 Sleeping on the bed  
 At midnight her lover  
 Mounts his horse and rides away.

## VI

Your horse is like the moon  
 Its rider shines as the lightning  
 Your body is bright as the sun  
 My heart weeps for love of you.

## VII

She has lit a fire in her courtyard  
 She has run weeping out into the road  
 Her blanket is over her head  
 Why has she gone into the road to weep ?

## VIII

Her long hair is all scattered on the ground  
 I am going to pick the flowers  
 At sunset her hair is all scattered on the ground  
 And I am going to pick the flowers  
 At bed-time her hair is all scattered on the ground  
 I have picked a lovely flower.

## IX

The clouds are dark and full of rain  
 How will you journey to that far-distant land ?  
 The red turban of my love is getting wet  
 The long hair of his girl is drenched  
 How will you journey to that far-distant land ?

## X

She is very beautiful  
 But her young breasts are fallen  
 He fondles them no longer  
 That once were his loved playthings  
 Youth passes quickly, quickly  
 But a girl's youth endures  
 The shortest time of all.

VERRIER ELWIN

*Kamar Marriage Song*

FROM BINDRA NAVAGARH

Walk slowly, oh girl,  
The crown on your head will fall down,  
The earrings will fall down  
Listen to the request of the seven Suhasins.  
The string of beads hanging about your neck will fall down,  
The bangles on your arms will fall down,  
The rings on the fingers will fall down,  
Sari tied at the waist will fall down,  
The anklets will fall down,  
The rings on the toe will fall down,  
Listen to the words of seven Suhasins.

DURGA BHAGWAT

*Korku Marriage Song*

FROM HOSHANGABAD

A palanquin of gold they have kept ready for you,  
O bridegroom, be seated.  
They have brought a fine turban for you,  
O boy, put it on.  
Beads of gold they have brought for you,  
O darling, adorn yourself,  
Printed cloth, gold and red is also here,  
O bridegroom, be quickly dressed:

DURGA BHAGWAT

*Twelve Pardhan Dadaria*

I

As one bends the mango branch  
And breaks it in the end  
So has my love for this slim-bodied girl  
Brought me to tears.  
As one cuts long straight branches  
From the thorn-bush  
So quick and straight  
Make answer to my song.

## II

The blackbird talks at midnight  
She must speak, what else can she do  
For her heart is longing for him.

## III

There is white water on the hill  
How suddenly  
As I was drawing water  
He made me his bed.

## IV

Only with a rope can you draw water from a well  
I told you 'Don't don't'. But now I am pregnant.

## V

You went to the bazaar and brought home a pot.  
So sit in your house and play with the baby.

## VI

In a big house there is a little door  
The Raja comes to visit it on any excuse.

## VII

The gun is crooked, the bullets are soft  
Though others think you mad, how sweet are your words to me.

## VIII

O reaper, you are letting the sheaves fall to the ground  
How I desire that slender waist of yours.

## IX

My stick is caught in the mango tree  
And all the branches shake  
But of the stick there is no sign.  
The swing is swinging  
And there sits my *gajabel*  
Take me in your swing  
And let me ride with you.

## X

Pigeons are feeding on the hillside  
Don't smile at me, you are only a baby.

## XI

The bullock wears a bell, the buffalo a clapper  
Do not be angry, I am still a raw girl.

## XII

The long-nosed rat wanders all over the new house  
You wander everywhere after me.

SHAMRAO HIVALE and VERRIER ELWIN

## JAMMU STATE

*Five Dogra Songs*

## I

If you must leave to-day my soldier !  
Take me, too, with you,  
Duggar, our land, is dear to us.  
I'll adorn my arms with new, fine bangles  
Duggar, our land, is dear to us.  
O rider of the blue horse, my lord !  
Yours is more blue than all the horses.  
Duggar, our land, is dear to us.  
I'll adorn my arms with new, fine bangles  
Duggar, our land, is dear to us.

## II

Rest for a while, only for a while, my love  
Beneath the banyan tree, my moon, rest for a while.  
The rice is white and fine  
And I have plenty of buffalo milk  
And the rice boiled in milk makes a good dish, my love.  
Rest for a while, only for a while, my love  
Beneath the banyan tree, my moon, rest for a while.

## III

The Raj of the Dogra king is hard.  
O when should I come to you, my love ?  
Small rain-drops are falling  
The sky is heavy with the clouds.  
Your shirt is made of the flowered cloth  
And inside it move two round lemons.  
The Raj of the Dogra king is hard  
O when should I come to you, my love ?



## IV

I found your land pleasant and charming, king of the hills !  
 I found your land all full of colour  
 Yet one day I'll bid it adieu  
 And I'll leave my children behind.  
 Never again will I come here, king of the hills !  
 Had I been the lightning amidst the clouds  
 I would have frightened you with a sudden flash.

## V

Sister, he snatches you away from us  
 This Banjara, a stranger from a distant land.  
 Who'll go with us  
 To fetch the corn-ears ?  
 Who will pluck the buds with us ?  
 And the small, delicious figs ?  
 Sister, he snatches you away from us  
 This Banjara, a stranger from a distant land.

DEVENDRA SATYARTHI

## NEPAL

*Three Nepali Songs*

## I

On the path above the peak of the Himalayas  
 O when will the snow gather ?  
 The rippling stream and the flying heart  
 O where will they stop ?

## II

The elder and younger sisters have gone  
 To graze the cows in the forest:  
 The soldier's life is not certain even for a moment,  
 He must face death in the battle-field.  
 A vegetable is delicious with spices  
 The gram-curry is delicious with ghee:  
 The finger-ring looks nice with a gem,  
 The soldier looks nice in the army.  
 Nine lacs of stars fill the sky  
 One by one I cannot count them:  
 My heart's secret reaches my lips  
 Yet I cannot speak it out.

## III

The pebbles which the mistress of this house touches,  
 May they be turned into gems,  
 The earth, she treads upon,  
 May it be turned into grains.  
 The leaves, she brushes past,  
 May they be turned into silks.  
 The water, she touches with her hands,  
 May it be turned into oil.  
 May Lakshmi always abide in this house,  
 May the young and the old grow like the bananas,  
 May they all prosper like the *dobi* grass,  
 May they stand like the banyan and the *pipal* trees,  
 May this house be filled with rich raiments from the plains,  
 May the salt of Bhot and the gold of Lhasha fill the stones of  
 this house.  
 May all sufferings and diseases of this house  
 Be washed away by mother Ganges.  
 May all the troubles of this house be blown off  
 By the winds, above the Himalayan peaks.  
 May all the blessings come true that we the Deusi-singers pray  
 for.  
 The song of felicitations is ended.  
 Come, brothers, let us return to our homes.<sup>1</sup>

DEVENDRA SATYARTHI

## ORISSA

*Ten Juang Dance Songs*

## I

## FOR THE VULTURE DANCE

Golden vulture  
 Silver vulture  
 With ungainly hop  
 She devours the corpse  
 Golden vulture  
 Silver vulture  
 With exploring bill  
 She pecks out the soul

1. Deusi songs are sung by boys and men of the poorer classes when begging sweets at the Diwali festival.

Golden vulture  
 Silver vulture  
 Flapping her wings  
 She pecks the eyes  
 Golden vulture  
 Silver vulture  
 She breaks the *rai* tree  
 And drinks the sweet juice  
 Golden vulture  
 Silver vulture.

## II

## FOR THE KOEL DANCE

*Kuhu kuhu*, koel of spring  
 I can hear what you are saying  
 In the forest burns a fire  
 With water from the hollow bamboo  
 Quench the blazing fire  
*Kuhu kuhu*, koel of spring  
 I can hear what you are saying.

## III

## FOR THE SPARROW DANCE

Rungutiya bird ! Rungutiya bird !  
 The Rungutiya bird sits on the *gangai* stalk  
*Rat rat* she munches the grain  
 The Rungutiya bird sits on the ears of rice  
 To her tree she carries the grain  
 The Rungutiya bird sits on the *rumha* branch  
 To her tree she flies with the fruit  
 She sits there and munches it *rat rat*  
 Rungutiya bird !

## IV

## FOR THE PEACOCK DANCE

Red and green  
 Are the peacock's  
 Feathers  
 As the long-tailed peacock dances  
 He watches his own shadow  
 Which is the dance, girl  
 That wearies your loins ?

## V

## FOR THE BEAR DANCE

Bear bear bear  
 Eater of dumar fruit  
 When you have eaten it  
 All along the path  
 You leave your droppings  
 Eater of dumar fruit.  
 Bear bear bear  
 Eater of mangoes  
 When you have eaten them  
 All along the path  
 You leave your droppings  
 Eater of mangoes.

## VI

## FOR THE ELEPHANT DANCE

*Lasro phasro*  
 Sways the elephant  
 What fruit  
 Does the elephant eat?  
 Four and twenty young girls  
 I will pick and bring  
 Four and twenty  
*Pān*-eating girls I will bring  
 The elephant has eaten  
 The branch of a banyan.  
*Lasro phasro*  
 Sways the elephant.

## VII

## FOR THE PYTHON DANCE

Like a mountain you are sleeping, python  
 Python, python, python, python of Malyagiri  
 In a cool cool place you are sleeping, python  
 Python, python, python, your tail is like a peacock's  
 Python, when you eat a deer  
 You catch it by the head  
 Python, when you eat a sambhar  
 You catch it by the head  
 Python, python, python, python of Malyagiri  
 Like a mountain you are sleeping.

## VIII

## FOR THE COBRA DANCE

Dance as the cobra dances  
 With hood erect  
 Girls, fair girls, don't be afraid  
 The great snake people  
 Live in the lower world  
 With their bite they poison men  
 Girls, fair girls, don't be afraid.

## IX

## FOR THE DEER DANCE

O phantom deer  
 As the deer are grazing they suddenly leap away  
 First goes the roe  
 Then goes the buck  
 The phantom deer are grazing  
 With lowered horns they graze  
 There is a hunter by the way  
 He fits and shoots his arrow  
 The deer falls  
 O phantom deer.

## X

## FOR THE WILD BOAR DANCE

Snout of the wild boar  
 Guzzles *taku taku*  
 I am running away  
 With the girl Basundi  
 Her body is slender  
 But for the rice-husker she is perfect  
 The wild boar wander in the forest  
 When they see a man  
 They run away for fear  
 And hide among the trees.

VERRIER ELWIN

A *Bhumiya* Song

Boy : So many days have passed I have not seen your face  
 Where have you gone, my treasure of the wretched ?

Girl : O you wretch! inconstant, give up Gop<sup>1</sup>  
 And come to me soon.

1. The place where the Gopis played with Krishna.

Boy : No sleep in the dark dense night.  
If I could have you,  
I would keep you in my lap,  
And sleep well.

Girl : To the horse the saddle  
To the king the turban,  
I am with you always,  
In an instant, I will sit on your lap,  
Don't say no to me then.

Boy : Clouds are rumbling upon clouds,  
Which cloud sends you water ?  
If you were with me now,  
You would be a jewel to my youth.

Girl : On the wrist black glass bangles, on the arms bracelets.  
No hunger if you are by my side.  
I feel thirsty for love,  
Beyond price is the word.

L. N. SAHU

## THE PUNJAB

### *Five Songs from the Simla Hills*

#### I

The month of Jeth has come,  
The sun burns me;  
Now play your flute to me, my love !

#### II

O archer ! please listen,  
You may give my horns to a mendicant, to a saint,  
*Dur, Dur*, he'll make music as he'll blow into it!  
You may give my skin to some Pandit, to some learned teacher,  
O he'll spread it under him !  
You may give my eyes to a Queen, a beauteous Queen,  
She'll preserve them in a small box !  
You may give my legs to a horse, to a fast-running horse,  
O he'll surpass the enemy in the battle.

## III

O stream, going downward !  
 With stones in your course, you flow.  
 But what makes me come beyond my village ?  
 Ah me, I was destined to share my food  
 In a distant land !

## IV

The flowing water ripples,  
 and the still water is calm;  
 O I left coming to you, my love,  
 since I understood your nature.

## V

O we will sow the maize,  
 the seeds of cucumber and *tori*, too  
 we will sow;  
 O our love-affair  
 has reached the ear of the Kapki tree:

DEVENDRA SATYARTHI

## SOUTH INDIA

*Coorg Nursery Rhymes*

## I

Call the crow's sister  
 When is the wedding ?  
 Tomorrow or Sunday morn  
 All the kite's young ones  
 Perished in the stream  
 All the crow's young ones  
 Are searching for cheese.

## II

One Chemba took a brass pot  
 And Chemba's wife a tom-tom  
 The bull takes up a bell  
 Young Kapla took a horn  
 And Eyappa a stick  
 The girl must have a cloth  
 And I a spoon of flour.

## III

The little finger nail is small  
The finger for the ring is gold  
The middle finger loveth coins  
The fourth is called Kotera  
The thumb is Murutika  
And both are gone for cheese.

C. E. GOVER

*A Yanadi Song*

Come down to catch the snake  
O snake-charmer, behold the standing snake  
Be sure the pipe sounds well  
Come come with the big snakes in the basket  
And the little ones in the lock of your hair  
When I went down the bank of the Yerracheru  
And saw the harvest cut  
The cobra crawled beneath the harvester  
Ayo! Ayo! Ayo!

G. N. THOMSEN

*Songs of mourning, probably from Chingleput District*

## I

## A WIFE MOURNS HER HUSBAND

With what rare love you took me, my lord  
With what splendour we came in procession  
Riding upon an elephant, my god  
My lord, if you came to the river bank  
Hearing the elephant bell ringing  
I would light the cooking fire  
Riding a horse, my god  
If you came to the tank  
Hearing the horse bell ringing  
I would get your hot bath ready  
We like milk and water  
Were bound in love to one another  
My golden brother-in-law  
Is it the decree of Siva



That we like milk and water should be parted ?  
 We like small birds for a time  
 Built a nest  
 We as husband and wife, O god  
 While we were united.  
 My golden brother-in-law  
 Is there any right for that bull-like Yama  
 To come and separate us ?

## II

## A MOTHER MOURNS THE DEATH OF HER CHILD

O the apple of my eye, my darling, my blissful paradise  
 Apple of my eye, where have you hidden yourself ?  
 My golden bead, my eyes  
 My flower, where have you hidden yourself ?  
 Gem-like apple of my eye, my blissful paradise  
 I do not know how you have gone away  
 Even as a capering deer leaps  
 You have jumped into the well  
 Even as the capering deer  
 Have you jumped into the lake.

*After E. THURSTON*

*Vedda Songs*

Darling, darling, the wind and rain are coming  
 From outside the Seven Seas  
 Look brother thunder and lightning are coming  
 From the direction of the sea  
 For fear my body is losing strength  
 Let us go to the Rajawalo cave  
 My two princes, we cannot go there. Stay.  
 O lovely princes, *yaku* and gods are in the forest.  
 Sky and earth are getting dark  
 Are not *kon* fruits falling  
 At Enagala and Malagala ?  
 Let us go to the Rajawalo cave.

## II

For gruel or food, the life will not depart  
 For cold or wind, the life will not depart  
 For rain or dew, the life will not depart  
 If there be no wife, the life will depart.

## III

They let down, let down the great *mawila* creeper  
 They drive away the bees with smoke  
 The comb was cut with the golden sword  
 For the young sisters of Morane.

After SELIGMAN

## NOTE

Of the poems presented in this anthology, the Bhattra, Pardhan, Uraon, Kayesth and Juang poems are published for the first time. Of the remaining poems, the Ao, Rengma and Lhota Naga songs are from the well-known monographs by Mr. J. P. Mills on these tribes and the Angami Naga Songs from Dr. J. H. Hutton's *The Angami Nagas* (Macmillan, 1921). The Lakher songs, which are printed as prose in Mr. N. E. Parry's *The Lakhers* (Macmillan, 1932), have here been arranged in their rightful form as poetry, but no other alteration has been made in the text. The Muria Leja Song, recorded in the Amabal Pargana of Bastar State in a Halbi original, is reprinted from *New Verse*, February-March 1937. The Marathi Grinding Songs first appeared in *The New Review* (Calcutta), May-June 1940; the Gond poems in *Songs of the Forest* (Allen and Unwin, 1935). The Murha Dadaria represent a restoration to their proper form as independent two-line songs: in *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces* (Macmillan, 1916) they are incorrectly printed as one long poem. The Baiga poems are reproduced from *The Baiga* (John Murray, 1939); the Simla, Dogra and Nepali Songs are from articles in *The Modern Review*, December 1939, and *The Rural India*, April and March 1942, respectively; the Coorg Nursery Rhymes are from *The Folk-Songs of Southern India* (Madras, 1871); the Yanadi Song is from E. Thurston's *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909). The Mourning Songs are slightly adapted (chiefly by the omission of irrelevant material) from E. Thurston's *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1907), and the Vedda Songs are from C. G. and B. Z. Seligmann's *The Veddas* (Cambridge University Press, 1911): here they are printed in verse instead of prose. The Korku and Kamar Marriage Songs are from Miss Durga Bhagwat's *Folk-Songs of the Satpura Valleys* (Journal of the University of Bombay, January 1940).

To the publishers of these books and journals, we make the fullest acknowledgments.

The originals of the songs from Assam, and the Vedda songs are printed with the translations in the books from which they have been taken. The originals of the Uraon poems have been published

in *Lil Khora Khekkhel* (Pustak Bhandar, Laheriasarai, Bihar, 1941)— numbers 137, 401, 956, 821, 483, 484, 480, 481, 482, 467, 1180, 1673, 1600, 1653, 1599, 1848, 1903, 1936, 1926 and 1972, and numbers, 2, 3 4 and 5 of the Kayesth poems are translations of poems 37, 33, 32 and 51 published in the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, September 1942. The originals of the remaining Kayesth poems will appear in successive issues of that Journal. Vernacular texts of the poems translated by Mr. Shamrao Hivale, Mr. Verrier Elwin and Mr. Devendra Satyarthi are under preparation. The remaining originals have not as yet been published and, with the exception of the Murha Dadaria which unfortunately can no longer be traced, are in the possession of the translators.

The following collections of songs made recently in Bihar are obtainable from the Honorary General Secretary, Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Museum Buildings, Patna—

<i>Bhojpuri</i>	..	..	W. G. Archer and Sankta Prasad, <i>Bhojpuri Gram Git</i> (1943).
<i>Uraon</i>	..	..	Rev. Ferdinand Hahn, Dharamdas Lakra and W. G. Archer, <i>Lil Khora Khekkhel</i> . A collection of 2600 Uraon songs in Uraon and Ganwari (Laheriasarai, 1941).
<i>Ho</i>	..	..	W. G. Archer, B. K. Dutt and Ram Chandra Birua, <i>Ho Durang</i> . A collection of 935 Ho Songs (1942).
<i>Kharia</i>	..	..	Jatru Kharia, Daud Dungdung, Manmaseh Tetetohran and W. G. Archer, <i>Kharia Along</i> , A collection of 1528 Kharia songs (1942).
<i>Munda</i>	..	..	Dilbar Hans, Samuel Hans and W. G. Archer, <i>Munda Durang</i> . A collection of 1641 Munda Songs (1942).
<i>Santali</i>	..	..	Gopal Gamaliel Soren and W. G. Archer, <i>Hor Seren</i> . A collection of 3000 Santal Songs (1943).

# MY VILLAGE STILL SINGS

## *A Glimpse of Panjabi Folk-Songs*

By DEVENDRA SATYARTHI

My sweetheart, who puts on anklets, is displeased with me,  
I feel my God is displeased with me !

sings Noora, the shepherd, my old playmate. Here everybody's sweetheart puts on anklets. Alive, alert, enthusiastic, Noora is ever a new man as he takes to his favourite song.

The ancient fields of my birthplace spread to the horizon. Here time moves rather slowly. Like the notes of a mystic song, shades of colour inspire me. I know husbands who beat their wives, and I know lovers ever adoring their favourite girls.

Love and God are interwoven in Panjabi songs. Like the art of story-telling amidst Ignazio Silene's Fentamara peasants, here folk-music 'resembles the ancient art of weaving, the ancient art of putting one thread after another, one colour after another, neatly, tidily, perseveringly, plainly for all to see.'

Noora's sweetheart, a daughter of the soil, is angry; he feels his God is angry. And when she laughs, God laughs. 'My sweetheart, who puts on anklets, laughed, I felt God laughed,' sings Noora rather emphatically. Is it her face that tells him of the Divine Artist? Noora, this frank, proud, self-assured shepherd, tells me that it is her voice that is all divine. And I at once remember an excellent account of the Indian lute, immortalized in the Arabian Nights; when its strings were touched it sang of the waters that gave it drink, and the earth whence it sprang, of the carpenters who cut it and the polishers who polished it and the merchants who made it their merchandise, and the ships that shipped it. She is incomparable, he says, as he takes to another song, put in her own mouth :

Last night my beloved embraced me,  
I caught a glimpse of God !

Love-songs immeasurably add to the joy of life. Love is given by God alone, Noora would tell you. Love is at times a risky game. But there is no fear. You will not die before your death, as the people have learnt generation after generation.

Noora's 'Song of the Graves' is a rare fragment of Panjabi folk-poetry:

The graves await us,  
As mothers await their sons!

Life without love is sad. Death is much more sad. The art of love, described realistically, is a constant theme:

With the edge of her veil, she fanned out the flame of the  
earthen lamp,  
With the twinkle of her eye she talked to me.

The fresh, raw milk is much liked by boys and girls. The *drinker of raw milk* is a significant term for one's sweetheart; innocent love is like raw milk:

To a son like a lump of firm curd, you'll give birth,  
O drinker of raw milk.

Jaikur gets milk from the goatherds:

The goatherds are calling,  
Jaikur, drink milk and go.

The goatherds leave her one day:

The goatherds broke their love and went away,  
Jaikur, who'll give you milk to drink?

Noora really enjoys the Song of Jaikur. Life is sad without a Jaikur, he says, but you must have a true Jaikur, not merely a drinker of milk. God lives in the land of love. The false love is like the shadow of a tree, the useless shadow of a leafless tree. But true love brings you face to face with God. Kiss her. Embrace her. It will not be divine. You really need a true Jaikur.

*Ghar di Nar*, or woman of the house, is the people's term for one's wife. She may be a true Jaikur for her husband. The old, experienced peasants often sing:

Without a woman of the house,  
Man is ruined.

My village, I am sure, expresses its every mood in song. Like Noora, here everybody would say, 'words are good enough to be put into a song.' Whenever the long-drawn song of some plougher reaches my ears, I feel it is the good earth itself that sings. The general tone of such a chant is rather sad. I follow the singing voice and reach the field that is being ploughed with songs of life and death:

In my dream, I embraced him,  
I opened my eyes and didn't find him.

A dust-cloud fills my sight,  
My love's figure I see no more.

My love's chest is of golden hue,  
My own body is all velvet.  
Carry my spinning-wheel there,  
O where your ploughs are tilling.  
Bibi recites dirges  
For friends who are dead.

I want to go on listening. The plougher beats his bullocks. He is the lord of the field. He abuses the bullocks and bitterly curses them. Next moment, he speaks to them in terms of endearment. Songs, abuses, curses and words of endearment, all are interwoven.

The plougher greets me as I put my hand on his back from behind. I know him, just as I know the typical sounds and voices of my village. He seems tired. He smiles at me, showing his healthy, white teeth. Both of his brothers have gone to the Army, he tells me, the elder brother is a worthless fellow for he sends no money, the younger one sends money every month.

'When will this war come to an end?'  
'A difficult question, nobody knows about it.'  
'What? Even God doesn't know?'  
'Perhaps.'

He looks amazed. Next moment, he comes out with a time-old chant:

God knows what is in everybody's heart,  
He is not an innocent child.

God is everywhere, in every heart, he says; God alone rules over all countries, all nations. Life is for sons of mothers, the heroes:

Hurray, hurray. On across the oceans,  
Sons of mothers go and fight,  
On across the oceans.

The whole countryside is like this. Open, broad and wind-swept. It has been like this for hundreds of years. It was all a jungle in olden days. Even now it is called in the neighbourhood, 'Jungal.' The Satluj is the nearest river from here. An old tributary of the Satluj went this way, the old peasants say with conviction; its dry bed is all mixed up in the fields now. The Sarhand canal now irrigates the whole countryside. Folk-songs of this part of the Panjab are actually a part of my blood; they move within my mind.

Here and there are patches of land on a higher level. The canal water cannot help them. The peasant looks at the sky. True

God, he says, wondering whether it will rain or it will be hot like yesterday. From dawn to dusk, he toils, yet he calls his harvest God's harvest. God sends rains.

Even the fields, under the protection of the canal, need the rains. *Savan* is the ancient term for July-August; on peasant lips it becomes *Saun*. The *Saun* cloud is dear to all. In songs, it takes the image of a genuine lover :

O you *Saun* cloud,  
Bend and pour down at once.

The image of the lover is clear and vivid in the mind of every virgin. The cloud, the ancient fertility emblem, stands apart. The whole mental outlook of the people, making a living poetry of the good earth, is revealed immediately.

The girls are like sparrows. The words of a marriage-song bring the power of Fate in bold relief:

We are a flight of sparrows,  
Father, we'll fly away:  
Far is the distance we must go a-flying,  
Father, tell us to which land we are going ?

Obviously, Fate is not the same in every sparrow's case. Every bride, as the day of marriage draws nearer, feels rather sad; the words of the ancient Chinese maiden, who was going to be married against her inclinations, would rightly portray her mind:

O sun, ah, moon,  
Why are you changed and dim ?  
Sorrow clings to me  
Like an unwashed dress.  
In the still of night I brood upon it,  
Long to take wing and fly away.<sup>1</sup>

Koonj, or the she-crane, is another beautiful image. After the marriage, every girl is expected to pay visits to her birthplace. The whole village awaits the Koonj; automatically, with the image of Koonj come the high mountains to give the exact picture of the birthplace of this beautiful, migratory bird:

Some time visit your motherland,  
O Koonj of the mountains.

My blood still moves to the rhythm of the *Song of the Koonj*. Like the Koonj, I go to far-off places on my song-pilgrimage, yet I cannot forget to return to my village. The whole countryside is echoing with ancient chants and lyrics. So ancient, yet so alive. They are still warm like the freshly baked loaves of bread.

<sup>1</sup> ARTHUR WALEY. *The Books of Songs*, p. 71.

Lucky people! Songs keep their inward flame alive. They carry them to death and back again to life. Sandstorms shake these people, they never tremble. When the roofs of their mud-houses leak, they know how to catch water in some earthen vessel. They are wise, wise enough to face life.

In their songs, my people talk to the ancient earth. The sad bride relates her story to the Pipal tree, who surely knows her since the first month of her life:

O Pipal of my birthplace,  
Your shade is cool;  
Water in your pond is dirty,  
The leaf-powder from its surface I set aside.  
Lachhi and Banto went to husbands,  
Whom shall I tell my story?  
Without fire, my bones are roasted,  
On my spinning-wheel I cannot make yarn,  
I wish I should go back to father-in-law's  
And confine myself within the house,  
My dowry I should set on fire.  
My husband sends me unstamped letters,  
At what cantonment he got enlisted?  
At sunrise and at sunset I think and think,  
Sorrow I drink, sorrow I eat:  
While leaving he didn't tell,  
Where shall I write him a letter?

The soldier's wife sheds tears, the whole countryside looks sad with her. She cannot put on her best dress, cannot smile before her mirror; she drinks sorrow and her bones are roasted without fire.

Noora, on the other hand, sings of his angry sweetheart: 'My sweetheart who puts on anklets is displeased with me; I feel my God is displeased with me.' He sings at the top of his voice. Damn this foolish romance, I tell him, he must feel sad for the soldier's wife, who does not know even the address of her husband. He would not listen to me.

'Yon Pipal of our village is more alive than you, Noora. He ever listens to the stories of men and women and he feels happy and sad with them. Damn your sweetheart's anklets. Damn your God.'

And Noora looks amazed. How long this war will go on? How long? The soldier must send his address to his wife, must return home one day. Then the soldier's wife, too, will put on her anklets.

Noora still looks amazed. War must end soon, I tell him, so that the soldier returns to his wife without delay.



But how can I stop everybody from singing? Life is hard, much more hard. Rates of everything have gone high hopelessly. Yet some pleasure is still left, it seems. Songs echo and re-echo. What a haunting music. It begins nowhere. It ends nowhere. It is only here and there that people with wrinkled faces show their fear; why doesn't the great God stop this war from being so lengthy, they ask, why can't the big countries behave like little boys? Little boys are better. Now they pick up a violent quarrel, next moment they are friends again.

Noora is silent now, but my village still sings.

# BAIGA POETRY

By W. G. ARCHER

## I

UNTIL THE last ten years the poetry of Indian tribes was, to all intents, a forbidden land. Bodding considered much Santal poetry 'pure gibberish', Brown was led to believe that even the Naga tribe of Tangkhuls did not understand many of the songs they sang, while Grignard prefaced an astonishing analysis of Uraon songs with the words 'The connecting thought which runs through the various stanzas of any Uraon song is extremely hard to catch ..... The eye is, at first reading, simply nonplussed by a display of flashes and a revel of colours, while the ear can make nothing of apparently disconnected bits of dialogue. A Western reader feels knocked about a little.' The publication of *Songs of the Forest*<sup>1</sup> in 1935 completely changed this situation, for Gond poems were shown to be both lucid and human. Four years later, *The Baiga*<sup>2</sup> finally removed the element of mystery, for in it the poetry of a tribe was presented not only on the widest possible scale but as an integral part of tribal life. Tribal poems were shown to be the clue to all the attitudes and overtones of tribal life, while the life of the tribe provided all the explanation necessary for the poems. Since the publication of *The Baiga*, it has been possible to see both the use of poetry to a tribe and the methods which a tribe finds natural to its poetry.

## II

Baiga poetry falls into three main groups—the Dadaria or little two-lined songs, the longer dance poems of which the Karma is the chief type, and the large body of songs which centre in the marriage system.

Of these groups, the Dadaria are the most elemental. They are the *ban bhajan* or forest songs, the equivalent of the *bir seren* or jungle songs of the Santals. It is these songs which have the greatest currency, for whether the Baiga are sitting round a fire at night, going out to their fields, striding to a market or communicating with their lovers, it is Dadaria that they sing. The themes are almost always affairs of the heart and it is because of their relevance to Baiga love that these small poems have a major importance. They are the definitions of Baiga love through which the tribal attitude to sex becomes explicit.

Girl: Come, take your axe and we'll go to the jungle  
Listen to my songs with your left ear.

<sup>1</sup> SHAMRAO HIVALE and VERRIER ELWIN, *Songs of the Forest*; the folk-poetry of the Gonds (London, 1935).

<sup>2</sup> VERRIER ELWIN. *The Baiga* (London, 1939).

Boy: I've come to the jungle for *jamun* berries  
O girl, they all say that you are a teacher of songs.

Girl: I've come to the jungle to find *kerela*  
Tell me why you are sad, O friend.

Boy: I've come to the jungle for *khamer* fruit  
How I long for you! Come and sit with me.

Girl: I've come to the jungle to gather thorns  
I weep with desire for a faithful lover.

Boy: I've come to the jungle to kill a wood-pigeon  
My love, I will leave everything for you.

Girl: Look, on that dry tree the monkeys are sitting  
O little brother, they all suspect us.

Boy: I've come to the jungle to dig for roots  
Don't be frightened, I'll pay a bullock for you.

Girl: O the mango in the valley and the creeper in the hill  
O love, come to me and I will hide you in my dress.

Boy: I've come to the jungle to gather leaves.  
It is in our youth we must take delight.

Girl: O my love, come drink some water and enjoy me  
As much as anyone could enjoy in all their life-time.

Boy: I've come to the jungle to kill a porcupine  
We'll sleep together by the mango-tree  
Hold me so close that no air can pass between us.<sup>1</sup>

In this sequence of Dadaria sung by a boy and girl in the jungle, the most urgent needs of Baiga life are expressed.

The second group of songs—Karma, Jharpat, Tapadi and Dassereliwar—are dance poems which go with the social dances of these names. They are usually sung by the men and girls as the dances wheel through the night but their use is not confined to dancing. Karma songs in particular have the familiar ease of Dadaria and are often sung with no reference to a festival or a dance. Their scope is somewhat wider than that of Dadaria and although many Karma and Jharpat songs illuminate love affairs, they also provide a vivid commentary on the daily routine of Baiga life.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 256.

## I

Alas ! alas ! you have forgotten  
 What happened underneath the banyan tree  
 O my love, you are leaving me  
 But never forget what happened  
 Beneath the banyan tree.

## II

Why did you go to the wooded hill ?  
 Why did you wander in the rice-field ?  
 I went to chop wood in the jungle  
 I went to cut rice in the field.

[KARMA]

## III

The *motiari* brings thorns from the jungle  
 She makes a fence for her garden  
 She peeps through it at the river  
 Looking down at the running water.

## IV

Pluck a bundle of castor leaves  
 And make a place for us to sleep  
 But when she lay down a scorpion bit her  
 O my *gondelaphul*, was it a scorpion that bit you ?  
 Why did you lie down on the ground  
 When you had just tied your hair so beautifully ?<sup>1</sup>

[JHARPAT]

The final group consists of Bilma or marriage songs and is sung at the various stages of a wedding. Some of these songs describe the incidents of a wedding.

On the hill the *mahua* tree roars in the storm  
 In the valley the wind sounds in the bamboos  
 Along the road Bhimsen is shouting  
 In the *marua* the drunkards are roaring out a song.<sup>1</sup>

But others, and these are of great significance, reflect the whole marriage situation.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 447, 447, 456, 456 and 280 respectively.

## I

The little girl is coming to her husband's house.  
 The girl is weeping  
 Let us go and see  
 Whose friends have come?  
 Whose friends have gone?  
 Let us go and see  
 The little girl is weeping.<sup>1</sup>

## II

O girl tie your sari tightly, round and round your body  
 Weep in your heart but keep your secret to yourself

Let them get the *marua* ready  
 Grind the haldi, fix the pole

Sleep with your husband, let your breasts delight him  
 But even to him never show the secret that is ours.<sup>1</sup>

Through these poems, the emotional overtones of a marriage, its actual implications, become evident. It is these poems which show what a Baiga marriage *means*.

## III

These groups summarise the three types of Baiga poetry but besides the formal songs, there are two kinds of material which are virtually extensions of Baiga poetry and are necessary for its understanding—Baiga mantra and Baiga riddles.

Baiga mantra consist of the charms and incantations which the Baiga use for driving away disease, making love-charms potent, expelling tigers, securing success in the chase or curing bites.

'Come, black Scorpion! Come, red Scorpion! O Scorpion looking like the tail of a hen! Let the poison down, O Scorpion! Let it come down, wandering. Your bite is of gold; we are bringing you down with a silver broom. Come down from the bones. Who brings you down? The guru brings you down, and I the guru's pupil. Let no poison remain in the whole body!'<sup>1</sup>

This mantra for curing a scorpion bite might well be taken as an archetype of the form. In its anxious focussing of an image, its frantic reliance on the image to accomplish its results, it anticipates an attitude which we shall see is vital to the poetry.

Baiga riddles, on the other hand, are exercises of tribal wit, an intellectual game that is played at weddings or when children are idling.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 280, 281, 393., respectively

They consist of two types :

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| A threshing floor upside down.                                | A toadstool.                        |
| A boy dances and as he dances ties a turban on his head.      | Parched gram.                       |
| A little old woman with a load of rags on her back.           | A hen.                              |
| He climbs and he burns ; he looks like a girl carrying water. | The sun.                            |
| It falls from on high. Pick it up and lick its buttocks.      | A wild mango.                       |
| A frog drinks the water of two tanks.                         | A child at the breast. <sup>1</sup> |

Riddles of this type range over the tribal landscape but they do not raise any issues. A second type, on the other hand, consists of sexual diagrams and has an obvious urgency. Mr. Elwin summarises this class as follows:

'The sexual act,' he notes, 'is symbolised by a piece of cotton being threaded into the eye of a needle, making a string of beads by pushing a cord through them, putting bangles on the arm, pushing the body into a shirt, slipping the foot into a shoe, pounding rice—the long rice-pounder falling regularly into the little cavity in the ground, grinding corn—the upper grindstone working on the passive lower stone. Ploughing and sowing seed is a common symbol, for the earth is woman and woman is the earth. The phallus often appears in the riddles as a sword, a plough, a stick, 'a gun that eats living flesh.' The female genitals appear as a sheath, a pot of curds, a mouse's hole covered with grass. The child in the womb is 'a fish in the river, white ants cannot harm it.' Deflowering a virgin is symbolized by iron in the blacksmith's forge—'Black when it goes in : red when it comes out.'<sup>1</sup>

In these riddles we are face to face with a fundamental Baiga interest.

Finally, there is an area of Baiga life which is in no way verbal and yet is inseparable from Baiga poetry. This area is the area of dreams, omens, magic and ritual conduct—an area in which words are replaced by visual images, and visual images give place to actual objects, in which life is no longer the material for poetry, but the methods of poetry are life itself.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 467—475, 420, respectively.

Baiga dreams, for example, disclose images which point to meanings far beyond themselves.

'I went to the jungle for a hunt. I killed a sambhar. Another sambhar rushed at me and caught me with its horns. Bhagavan was sitting in the horns. As they struck me, he turned into a girl. I stretched out my arms to take her and fell off the horns into a pond. In the pond was a big house with a golden door. I tried to open the door, but as I touched it, my hand was burnt and I awoke.'<sup>1</sup>

'If you see a snake, it means that a pretty girl is coming to the village.'

'If a girl 'kisses' you on the cheek, a snake will bite you.'

'If you see a pond with broken banks, there will be a theft in your house.'

'To see a fruit means that your wife is pregnant, to see a cucumber means that you are going to have a son.'<sup>1</sup>

In these dreams and dream interpretations, the images have the same ambiguous functions which we shall later see are characteristic of the poetry.

But besides dreams, omens also employ methods which are akin to poetry.

'If a jackal "cuts the road", you must prepare a *thua* on the spot. Put the branch of any bush on the path, and a big stone above it. The branch represents the enemy who sent the jackal, the stone is his grave.'<sup>1</sup>

Or again, 'it is very bad to see a crow bathing alone in a stream. It means that some relation who lives far away has died and no message has yet had time to reach you.'<sup>1</sup>

Here material objects are working in the same way as the images of a Dadaria.

Magic, also, harnesses the strangest objects to secure the most concrete results. Mr. Elwin gives a multitude of examples but I quote one to illustrate its method.

'Difficulties (of childlessness) never occur in the lives of those girls who were wise enough, at their first menstruation, to go into the jungle, pick a great bundle of leaves, and bring them home on their hips as if the bundle was a child.'<sup>1</sup>

And finally, in ritual conduct, poetry again merges with life. In marriages, when the wedding is almost over, the Baiga 'make

<sup>1</sup> Op., pp. cit., 421, 409—11, 65, 65, 222, respectively.

an image of a woman out of mud, and set it up on the river bank. The husband has to shoot at it with his bow and arrow, and if he hits it first shot, they all say that his bride will stay with him. If he misses it, they say she will run away. In parts of Mandla they make a rough representation of a deer out of sticks and leaves.<sup>1</sup> Here there is no longer any poem: the action is itself a poem.

## IV

It will be obvious from these instances that there is no single method of Baiga poetry. A poem, for example, may be a simple direct statement.

## I

I begged you to come to me last night  
All my body was hungry for you  
But you never came  
My heart is breaking to pieces for your sake, my love  
But you never came.<sup>1</sup>

## II

If your husband has done a bunk  
Clean your teeth with a saj twig  
Wash your feet and wash your hands  
And soon you'll get another man.<sup>1</sup>

In poems such as these, there is no attempt to reinforce the statements with imagery. The force is in their simple directness and in that alone. But in a large class of Baiga poetry, there is no such simplicity.

## I

The mangoes and the tamarind are thick with fruit in  
spring  
At midnight my lover sends for me  
O, why does my lover send for me?<sup>1</sup>

## II

I have killed a peacock, I have cut shoots of green bamboo  
Tell me, my young love, when will you sleep with me?<sup>1</sup>

Here the poems are using an entirely different method—a method which is the reverse of direct and which we can only understand by a reference to the Baiga attitude to images.

This attitude may be defined as follows. An image of an object is regarded not only as vivid in itself but as capable of the most

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 80, 254, 240, 259, 442 respectively.



powerful associations with other images. The object can, as it were, exist not only as itself but also as the other objects which it resembles. A snake is not only a snake but a stick. A deer is not only a deer but a girl. An arrow is not only an arrow but a phallus. And it is the vivid collocation of these images which is the basis of the poetry.

The most evident expression of this attitude is the riddle. Here the most fantastic of fusions becomes possible through the pairing of diverse objects on the basis of affinities.

In some cases the chosen objects and their normal associations are so diverse that the effect is one of surrealist shock or horror.

A dried up frog carries a load on its back.	The cross beams of a house.
An old woman with teeth in her belly.	A leaf basket with the sticks sticking out in- side.

But in other cases, the clarity of the images is so intense that the result has all the effect of poetry.

Who would sleep on a moving bed ?	
Who would weep for a dead king ?	A flooded river and the death of a tiger.
The root is in the river, The flower is in the hill.	An earthen lamp.
The tiger roars in the ant's hole.	A gun. <sup>1</sup>

But if this is the essence of the riddle it is also the essence of the Dadaria and in fact a Dadaria with its midget verse might be defined as an expanded riddle. The riddle as it were forms the first line and the riddle's answer the second and just as the answer is attached to the riddle without any explanation, the second line of a Dadaria comes after its first line without any obvious link or connection.

Buxom is the peach-tree ;  
How its flowers blaze !  
Our lady going home  
Brings good to family and house.

Buxom is the peach-tree ;  
How its fruit swells !  
Our lady going home  
Brings good to family and house.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 470, 475—479, respectively.

Buxom is the peach-tree ;  
 How thick its leaves !  
 Our lady going home  
 Brings good to the people of her house.<sup>1</sup>

In this ancient Chinese folk-song, we have an exact parallel to the method of the Dadaria—the pairing of the buxom peach tree with the lady, the pairing of one image with another, the vitally important but latent link.

This method will be clearer if we analyse a group of Dadaria.

## I

That garland of beads does not become you  
 When you are distant from my heart, how sad I feel.<sup>2</sup>

The meaning is that a girl with a wrong necklace looks as upset as a boy without a girl.

## II

My axe has felled the first tree in the bewar  
 My eyes are broken through looking at the girl  
 Who has carried my pei to the forest.<sup>2</sup>

The sight of the girl has broken the boy in the same way as the tree was felled by his axe.

## III

I have put a bullet in my new gun  
 Come on, my bed, I will put a new girl on you.<sup>2</sup>

Putting a new girl on the bed is like putting a bullet into a new gun. Both the gun and the bed are now ready.

## IV

The kachnar tree blossoms by Mother Narbadda  
 O girl, if you love me, let me sleep with you.<sup>3</sup>

Just as a tree blossoms by a river, a boy 'blossoms' when he sleeps with his girl.

## V

Against the sky swings the mango fruit  
 O my sweet enemy, take my life and I will take care of yours.<sup>2</sup>

Here, the mango swinging against the sky is an invitation to be taken, and the boy is like the mango and wants to be picked.

<sup>1</sup> ARTHUR WALEY, *The Book of Songs* (London, 1937), p. 107.

<sup>2</sup> *The Baiga*, pp. 440,—442.

## VI

How ripe are this year's mangoes !

O girl, I will catch you somehow : you wont be able to  
save yourself.<sup>1</sup>

Even if you hide beneath the water I will drag you out.

Mangoes are a common symbol for the breasts. The meaning therefore is that just as the mangoes are ripe, so also is the girl, and both are ready for taking.

## VII

The branches of the lime tree are heavy with fruit,  
So sleep with me to your heart's content, O friend.<sup>1</sup>

The meaning here is the same as in VI. Like the lime tree, the girl also is 'heavy with fruit.'

## VIII

The stars are scattered here and there about the sky  
O my brother's friend  
Tell me the secret about his wife.<sup>1</sup>

Telling secrets about a wife is like scattering stars in the sky. Once the secret has been given out, it will be scattered all over the village.

## IX

The room is freshly cleaned with cow-dung  
The rat runs across the floor  
My love, you go ahead and I will follow.<sup>1</sup>

The room is the recumbent girl and the rat is the lover.

## X

You catch the fish and I will cook it  
The love of my friend takes me out of the world.<sup>1</sup>

Fish is a common symbol for the male organ, and catching and cooking it is an image for the sexual act.

## XI

We put long poles across the roof  
To save it from being blown away  
O girl, give me what you promised last year  
Before you leave me this time.

Giving the boy a promise is like putting poles on a roof—to save their love from being blown away.

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 440—442, 443.

## XII

The bear is eating mahua ; the camel eats the pipal  
 The boy is winking at his girl  
 But her breasts are hurting her, O friend.<sup>1</sup>

The meaning is that the boy is wanting to possess the girl just as the bear is devouring the mahua. If the camel can satisfy itself with the pipal, it is only right that the girl should satisfy the boy.

In all these poems, the two parallel images are merely placed together and there is no express link.<sup>2</sup> It is their compression into a Dadaria which causes them to fuse and gives the incandescence of poetry.

The pairing of images is not however confined merely to the Dadaria. It is the basis for many other songs. But instead of the poem consisting of only two images, the comparison often starts the poem and the poem develops from the image.

The chicks of the hen are scattered here and there  
 The wild cat catches them and eats them one by one  
 O Suasin who art taking me round and round the pole  
 Thou art my little sister, tell me, O tell me  
 Who will enjoy the first fruits of my youth.<sup>3</sup>

## [MARRIAGE POEM]

In this poem, the chicks are the girls in a family and the wild cat is a village gallant. The meaning is that although she is being technically married, it by no means follows that her husband will be the first to possess her.

Another development of the method is when images continue to be paired, but instead of the pairing being explicit, the fusion is latent. An image refers to a second image but instead of stating this image, the poem omits it, and the second image is left to be understood.

Tonight you took me under the mahua tree  
 Once you beat me  
 Twice you beat me  
 Thrice you beat me with a strong arrow  
 O this very night you took me beneath the mahua tree.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 443.

<sup>2</sup> But compare the following Dadaria :

As water from a well is drawn out and thrown away.

So how great a waste for a girl to see her lover from a distance.

This Dadaria makes explicit the whole method of the form. Op. cit.,

p. 439.

<sup>3</sup> Op. cit., pp. 280, 254, respectively.

In this poem, as in the last rite of the wedding, the arrow is an arrow but also the phallus and the beating is the sexual act.

In my garden is a well  
All round it hang the mangoes  
How deep and cool my well is  
But you are deeper far in love  
The sun beats down and you are thirsty  
But you care not for my water  
You know the deep love of the heart.<sup>1</sup>

The meaning will be clear from a Baiga riddle for a woman :

Outside it is beautiful  
It goes to and fro  
But open it and there is nothing but the mouth of a well.<sup>1</sup>

Or consider the following poem :

Her legs are moving  
The *bansi* is moving  
Her *chutki* are tinkling  
Which hand do you use to put the bait on the hook ?  
Which hand do you use to kill the fish ?  
With my left hand I bait the hook  
With my right I kill the fish.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Elwin notes that this is sung when men and women are going to and fro in the water plunging in their fishing traps. But even this song is only partly a fishing song. It is Baiga men and not Baiga women who fish with a line and use hooks, and the imagery will be plain from the preceding Dadaria.

Or again :

Take me to some country that I have never seen  
Where, O my love, the thunder roars  
Where, O my love, the lightning flickers  
And the rain pours down.<sup>1</sup>

In this poem the images imply all the potency of a lover.

There is yet one further way in which Baiga images create poetry. In the preceding instances, the relation between two images, whether latent or explicit, has always been precise. In Baiga mantra, on the other hand, the relation continues, but it is as if the effort is to make it completely obscure. Images follow one another, all directed, it may be, at binding a witch :

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 255, 478, 82, 447, respectively.

## I

I bind the sharp end of a knife  
 I bind the glow-worm in the forehead  
 I bind the magic of nine hundred guru  
 I bind the familiars of nine hundred witches  
 I bind the fairies of the sky...

Let the sky turn upside down, let the earth be over-  
 turned, let horns grow on horse and ass, let moustaches  
 sprout on a young girl, let the dry cow-dung  
 sink and the stones float, but let not this charm fail.<sup>1</sup>

## II

I bind the glow-worm of a virgin  
 I bind every kind of Massan  
 The nail of bone  
 The lamp of flesh  
 Who binds the spirits?  
 The guru binds and I the guru's pupil...  
 May the waters of the river flow uphill  
 May the dry cow-dung sink and stones float  
 But let not my words fail.<sup>1</sup>

'The sharp end of a knife', 'the glow-worm of a virgin', 'the nail of bone', 'the lamp of flesh'—all these are probably, at bottom, sexual symbols, but it is the strained insistence on the image, the remoteness of the reference, the strange adequacy which gives the mantra its mysterious force.

In these mantra, Baiga poetry reaches the limit of its power.

## V

The use of this poetry to the Baiga tribe will be evident from its methods. 'Images,' as Stephen Spender has observed, 'are not still-lives to be hung on walls. They are visions of the history of the race and of life and death.' Through the pairing of images, urgency is given to tribal statements. A simple statement becomes intense by being linked to a vivid object. Tension is dissipated by releasing the feelings into the poems. Through the poems, tribal stresses become manifest and are dissolved.

But there are other uses. Mr. Elwin emphasises, for example, the strictly practical uses of many Dadaria and Karma. Like sonnets sent by a lover to a mistress in 16th and 17th century England, they are aids to love-making, charming gestures which have the frankest of objects. Again, many songs are aids to the dance. They provide a structure of interest without which its

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., pp. 390—391.

abstract rhythms might flag. Above all, the songs have the continual function of amusement. They are the tribe's effort at entertainment, its method of passing lonely evenings, its way of electrifying all the barren intervals of life.

But if these are the uses of the poetry to the tribe, its value to the scholar will be other. More than anything except perhaps the life-histories, Baiga poems are documents of the Baiga. Without the poems, we might know the Baiga system but we should not know Baiga feelings. Through the poems, we see the Baiga heart.

But it is not only the ethnologist to whom Baiga poetry is relevant. The value of ethnology lies in its objective presentation of scientific truth. But this is only one of its uses. Besides its value as science, it has the vital function of stimulating cultures. We do not study man merely to dissect him. We examine in order that we may learn. Behind twentieth century art in Europe lies Negro sculpture. The importance of Baiga poems is that they suggest a new starting point for contemporary poetry both in England and in India.

# MOTHER KOSI SONGS

BY EDWIN PRIDEAUX

MOTHER KOSI has long held sway. She visits the land, meting out punishment, giving rewards, striking with dread terror, and often with whims difficult for her subjects to comprehend. Her father is Himalaya—father of many maidens—the Creator Shiv enthroned in the heights. Famous she is, and powerful—more powerful than all others. Worshipped in song and a constant presence, her influence is very real to the people in her tracts.

For the Kosi river rushes down through the foothills from its huge catchment area behind them in Tibet and Nepal, a roaring flashing torrent debouching on to the gently sloping plain of North Bhagalpur in Bihar. There it rushes on, splayed into deltaic mazes, cutting the sandy soil with rapidity and caprice. The snows melt in May and the volume swells. Over a widening belt the earth becomes sodden and flooded. The cultivator on the margin of the flood area wonders whether he will be engulfed or saved. Silt and sand, of which the extent becomes known when the water finally subsides in October, bring with them grass and reeds in the long upper reaches gradually overwhelming man's efforts at cultivation. The next victim shudders. Lower down, nearer the end of its course, and after the heavier sand has been dropped, wide silt-bottomed lakes, interspersed by the true stream currents bring winter fertility. Kosi's gifts and devastations are a hope and a fear to all, her vagaries a wonder.

Fearful also are the winter cold and fevers that follow in her wake, and pitiful are the nakedness and poverty which she brings. The fortunate are able to praise her for her patronage of the cow—a reference to the flourishing Ghee trade of the grass jungle tract. But she brings despair and homelessness to most—a despair beaten off as long as possible but bringing physical and mental deterioration, ultimately driving the small cultivator to debt and emigration, abandonment of home and usually to premature death. Yet, when she has passed on, many imagine her return beneficial. She leaves a waterless thirsty tract behind.

The songs that follow are expressive of the reactions of the simple people to contact with this overhanging presence. They are sung spontaneously without any particular regard for occasion, and though topical songs are frequent, there are various obvious folk themes which are embodied and joined together according to the inclination or knowledge of the singer. The songs are mostly straightforward and simple.

The first two themes relate to the difficulty in crossing the treacherous streams—First is the Boatman theme as illustrated by the following two songs. The boatman suspects his passenger is a witch.



## I

Blows the east wind O Kosi mother;  
 Waves the Semar grass.  
 Kosi stands waiting on the river bank.  
 'Bring the boat, bring the boat, O boatman brother  
 We five sisters would cross to the far side.  
 Of what is your boat, O boatman? Of what your steering  
 oar?  
 How shall we five sisters embark and cross the stream?'  
 'The boat is golden, O Kosi mother; and silver is the oar,  
 Embark on this, O Kosi, and I will take you across.'  
 Now the boat is rowed on; now the current takes it;  
 Now the boatman asks them what is their caste.

## II

Kosika of seven sisters stands on Jamuna's bank.  
 'Bring a boat, bring a boat, O Jhingwa boatman,  
 Take us seven sisters across.  
 Of what is the boat, O boatman, of what your rowing oars?  
 How will you, O boatman, take us across?'  
 'The boat is of gold, the oars of silver  
 I will take you easily over.'  
 He rows the boat onwards; again it is swept back;  
 Again the boatman asks them what is their caste.  
 'I am a Brahmin's daughter; Kosi is my name.  
 Now why are you asking me, boatman, about my caste?'

This again is related to Kamla, the gentler of the sisters, in the following song, in which the messenger of Shiv takes the oar and brother Koila (another North Bihar river) steers her across the Ganges:

## III

Along the river bank calls Kamla Devi,  
 'Bring the boat, bring the boat, O Jhimla boatman!'  
 'Broken is the boat, O Kamla mother, broken are the oars.'  
 How shall I take you, mother, across the Ganges Stream?  
 Eight woods took Kamla and made the boat.  
 The front plank she coloured vermillion  
 On the back she put gold leaf and silver.  
 On the front plank Bhairab seizes the oars;  
 On the back Koila holds the steering-oar.  
 In the middle sits the virgin Kamla.  
 Jhimla rows the boat on; again it is swept back;  
 Sometimes Jhimla asks her for a gift.  
 'Row on! row on! take the boat to the bank!'  
 Thus sings your servant, mother, with folded hands;  
 Forgive, forgive his many faults.

There is the very common 'trader' theme, appearing with many variations, in which cajolery, protestations and promises eventually secure a safe passage. In the grass and water wastes, all trade is confined to the pack bullock. Travel and trade is slow and not without danger. The scouring and silting of streams make them dangerous to cross in flood. The small boats of the ferries upset and are swept away:

## IV

'The bullocks of all others, Kosika, you have taken across,  
But mine to the barren land, you have turned back.'  
'If I take you over, trader, what reward will you give?'  
'At each of your crossings, Kosi, I will give ten betel leaves;  
At home a milk offering and a great feast will I give.'  
'At home in household things, O trader, you will even forget  
my name.'  
'Even if my life goes, Kosi mother, while breath is mine  
I will not forget your name.'

## V

'See the river, see the river, the Tiljuga river; there mother  
flows river Balan.  
The bullocks of all others, Kosika, have reached Amarpur;  
But my cows and bullocks have been turned back to the barren  
land.  
At every crossing, mother, I'll offer ripe rolled betel leaves;  
On reaching home, mother, I will give you two young goats.'  
'On reaching home, in talk with his caste-folk, a trader forgets  
even Kosi's name;  
Only in time of trouble, my trader, do you make profusest  
vows.'  
'Even if my life goes, Kosika, even if my breath goes,  
I will not forget your name;  
This time, O, mother, let me go over safely.'

## VI

'They all sell "long-ilaichi," Kosi mother;  
I deal in ripe rolled betel leaves.  
All others' bullocks have crossed over, Kosi,  
But mine you have turned back to the barren land.'  
'Sleeping and idling you have passed your time;  
Now in Bhado you want to trade!'  
'At every crossing I will offer "long-ilaichi," at home a pair  
of kids.'  
'Reaching home, trader, listening to your wife, you will  
forget my name.'  
'If my life goes, if my soul goes, never, Kosi mother, will I  
forget your name!'

Kosi has her natural attendants for she rules the land in which she flows. Bhairab is her messenger, lent by Himalayan Shiv, attending her in the next song. Another is her favourite devotee and engineer, Rano Sardar, of a low labouring caste. Rano goes ahead with a spade to make the way. After Kosi has passed Bhairab follows to throw up sand and earth. Boatmen on the Kosi raise a shout 'Rano Sardar-ki-jai.'

## VII

Hail ! Hail ! O lordly Bhairab !  
 This way comes mother Kosi's stream ;  
 Ahead goes mother Kosi, following comes the stream,  
 Then comes Bhairab brother,  
 Hail ! Hail ! Lord Bhairab !  
 Shopmen, remove your Bazaar,  
 Mother Kosi's stream will pass this way !  
 Hail ! Hail ! Lord Bhairab !

Simple propitiation is not always successful. One never knows if favour will follow the gesture of the devotee, for the movements of the Kosi, except within broad limits, are unpredictable.

## VIII

I have made a milk offering  
 Mother Kosi is very unkind  
 Still she has not left me  
 I gave her a male kid  
 I gave her a she-kid  
 I made a milk offering  
 Indeed I made a milk offering.

## IX

See the spray flash, see the brilliance;  
 See the Tiljuga river !  
 See the Kosi; see the Kosi !  
 River Balan flows by !  
 See the foam of Kosi mother !  
 O shining Kosi mother, river Balan flows by !  
 With what shall I satisfy Jalma Goar, mother,  
 How shall I worship Balan ?  
 With betel and flowers, O mother, will I worship him,  
 With a kid will I worship Balan !  
 Even if my life goes, even if my breath goes  
 I will not forget your name !  
 Till now, Kosi mother, you have slept and waited.  
 When my turn comes, O mother, you rise to your height.  
 Thus sings your servant, mother, with folded hands;  
 Help him in his times of trouble.

## X

' Hard is the way to Morang, Salesh;  
 Kosi's streams have turned against me;  
 Kosi flows gently when others come;  
 There are nine-cubit waves, Kosi mother, when I come;  
 The bullocks of all others, mother, are by now at Amarapur,  
 But mine to the barren land you have turned back.'  
 ' If, O brother trader, I take your bullocks across,  
 What reward, O trader, will you give to me ? '  
 ' At each of your crossings, O Kosika, I will offer ten rolled  
 betel leaves;  
 At home I will offer milk, a feast, and a young goat.'  
 ' In times of trouble, O trader, you make profuse promises;  
 But you will forget even the name of Kosika when you reach  
 home.'  
 ' Even if my life goes, Kosi mother, even if my breath goes,  
 I will not forget your name.'  
 ' Seven times, brother trader, you have made such vows;  
 All seven times have you deceived me;  
 This time I will surely sink your boat.  
 All this time, O trader, you have spent sitting at home;  
 Now in Bhado month you start for trade ! '  
 ' All others trade in "long-aranchi;" I trade in ripe rolled  
 betel leaves;  
 These I will offer thee; these I will offer thee.  
 With folded hands I pray thee, Kosi mother,  
 That I may cross this time.'

Kosi is of admirable grandeur, devastating, levelling. Songs  
 evidently composed over a number of years refer to her changing  
 course.

## XI

To Kosi let me respectfully pray, Kosi with heaving waves;  
 Her stream emerges from the riven hills matchlessly strong.  
 She levels the steep slopes and fills the deep places;  
 Brings Kas and Patair reeds, washing away the paddy;  
 Brings water into every house, creating disease;  
 Mosquitoes and ' dans ' flies she keeps with her, spreading  
 fever.

Even now show us some favour, merciful mother !  
 To Kosi let me respectfully pray, to Kosi with heaving waves.

## XII

O flow slowly, Kosika ! gently flow !  
 O keep safe the honour of Supaul !  
 O you broke up Madhipura and brought it to Supaul;  
 O keep safe the honour of Supaul;

O since, mother Kosi, Madhipura came  
 You have wrought destruction in Supaul;  
 O your feet I touch, Kosika, and make my prayer  
 That you may save Supaul Bazaar.  
 O daily, rising, Kosika, we implore you,  
 That you may save Supaul Bazaar.  
 O in Supaul Bazaar, mother, all have become poor;  
 Government is not giving them relief;  
 O your feet I touch, Kosika; I hold you feet—  
 Go away to the western land !

## XIII

Strange is your grandeur, Kosi;  
 You thunder in the Dhemra:  
 You have moved the railway  
 From Budhma to Mathai.  
 You have deposited sand;  
 Malaria you have spread;  
 Strange is your grandeur, Kosi;  
 You thunder in the Dhemra.  
 Supaul you have seized,  
 And have broken the Gajna bridge.  
 You have reached to Alapur;  
 The walls of Alapur breaking,  
 Loudly you have thundered.  
 Strange is your grandeur, Kosi;  
 You thunder in the Dhemra.

## XIV

O Kosi mother, thy greatness is matchless;  
 Thou hast cut away roads and made them streams;  
 Bamboos and orchards, all have dried up,  
 Brush-wood grows on the threshing-floor.  
 Neither paddy nor wheat has grown ;  
 But, Kosi, thou hast brought much 'kash' and 'pater';  
 So sings thy servant, O mother, with folded hands;  
 Give succour to the poor.

## XV

Hard days have overwhelmed me ! Anxieties have killed me !  
 By taking loans I worked my fields;  
 I worked my fields; my paddy the Kosi swept away:  
 Anxieties have killed me !  
 By selling my bowl and dish I pay my landlord;  
 I pay my landlord, and the traders call me scoundrel !  
 My sons are naked ! My daughters are naked;

The clothes of my wife are torn and old;  
 Anxieties have killed me !  
 Food has run short and fuel run short;  
 As fuel runs short, I fast in the morning !  
 Anxieties have killed me !  
 Hard days have overwhelmed me !

## XVI

From mother Kosi's water, thousands have fallen sick,  
 There is no counting how many have left this world,  
 Haste, haste, O Sarkar !  
 All we subjects are being washed away in Kosi's mid-stream.  
 Haste, haste, O Sarkar !  
 From colds come fevers; fever lasts all day.  
 Haste, haste, O Sarkar !  
 There is no cloth for our bodies; how can we carry on ?  
 Haste, haste, O Sarkar !  
 In hospitals no medicine is given; the doctor is a cheat.  
 For everything money is asked; how can we carry on ?  
 By selling family ornaments we had prepared our fields.  
 One day I saw a dry river-bed; in the night it became a torrent.  
 In the morning I saw on all sides that all was under water  
 Haste, haste, O Sarkar !  
 When an Officer comes this way, his Orderly is bold;  
 For everything money is asked; how can we carry on ?  
 Haste, haste, O Sarkar !

In lighter vein the boatmen think and sing of the day-to-day  
 feminine actions of the sisters:

## XVII

In mid-tank, O Kosi, are thick sandal trees  
 Below them are flowing thousands of streams  
 Kosi takes off her clothes and ornaments  
 Has put on her bath cloth and taken her bath  
 O Great Goddess Kosika !  
 ' Who has taken my rings ?  
 Who has taken my necklace ?  
 With what shall I do my sixteen adornments ?'  
 O Greatest of Women, Kosika !  
 ' Hajipur market is now being held;  
 In the shops there I'll buy the ring and the necklace,  
 And then make my sixteen adornments.'

## XVIII

Of what is the comb, Kamla ? What are the comb-teeth ?  
 On what are you sitting combing your hair ?

Golden the comb, Kamla; silver the comb-teeth  
On a throne you are sitting combing your hair.  
The comb breaks, Kamla; its teeth are all scattered;  
The sixteen adornments cannot be made.

## XIX

To gather flowers the sacred mother has gone to the gardener's  
garden;

Her hair has caught in the branches of the flowers.

'Where are you, Bhairab Bhagat? Brother, free my hair!'

'Of all women the most exalted

O Sister, how can I free your hair?

Fire is flaming in your hair

Of all women the most exalted!'

'For you, brother, flaming fire, for me is a cooling wind'

'Of all women the most exalted!'

'If I free your hair, O sister, what reward will you give?'

'If you free my hair, brother, I will give you a feast of fried  
rice and curd.'

'Of all women the most exalted!'

'Fried rice and curd may suffice for you, sister; make me a  
gift of your husband's young sister.

Of all women the most exalted!'

'My husband's sister, O brother, is the wife of another; so  
how can I give her to you?'

Of all women the most exalted!'

Your servant, O mother has sung with folded hands;

Help him in his times of trouble; from age to age he will  
repeat your name.

# THE ROLE OF SONGS IN KONYAK CULTURE

By

CHRISTOPH VON FURER-HAIMENDORF

THE north-eastern part of the Naga Hills on the Assam-Burma border is inhabited by a tribe commonly known as the Konyak Nagas.<sup>1</sup> The exact distribution and size of this tribe is as yet a matter of conjecture, for it extends far into unadministered territory up to, and perhaps across, the Patkoi Range, and a good many Konyak villages have never been visited by either Indian or European. Though it appears that all Konyaks share certain cultural and linguistic traits which distinguish them from other Naga tribes, they do by no means form a homogeneous group, but show an extraordinary diversity of language, customs and even physical type.

In my book *The Naked Nagas*,<sup>2</sup> I have drawn a general picture of Konyak culture, and a more technical description of their social organization is given in my article *The Morung System of the Konyak Nagas, Assam*,<sup>3</sup> and the study *Das Gemeinschaftsleben der Konyak Nagas in Assam*.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the Konyaks is their highly developed artistic sense, which manifests itself in many aspects of their material culture. Konyak wood-carvings surpass in naturalism, in boldness and vigour of conception, and in technical finish, those of all other Naga tribes, and a people with so great a passion for beauty—a passion which leads them to decorate almost every weapon, implement or utensil as well as their own persons—might be expected to excel also in the field of music and poetry. But to judge the artistic value or even describe the qualities of the songs and poems of a primitive race is far more difficult than an appreciation of its plastic art. Except by mechanical means primitive music cannot be satisfactorily recorded even by the expert, and the layman finds himself at a loss to note even its essential features. To the western ear Konyak singing, based on a large scale of intermediate tones and half tones, seems rather monotonous and sounds to us indeed infinitely more 'foreign' than the songs of such tribes of Peninsular India as Gonds or Gadabas, and except for the war-chants, in which the tense emotion of the singers imparts itself to the listeners, the songs did not strike me as very attractive.

<sup>1</sup> *Konyak* is the word for 'man' in the language spoken in a comparatively small group of villages including Tanhai and Tamlu, but in official and ethnological usage it is now applied to all members of a large tribal group.

<sup>2</sup> London, 1939.

<sup>3</sup> J.R.A.I., Vol. LXVII, pp. 349-378.

<sup>4</sup> *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, Vol. LXXI, pp. 1-101.



When we come to the recording of the text of songs, we are again faced with peculiar difficulties. Konyak seems to belong to the Tibeto-Burman language group and has a complicated tonal system. No outsider has ever learnt any of the many Konyak dialects, and even Nagas of neighbouring tribes comment on the great difference between these idioms and their own languages: indeed I have rarely met a non-Konyak Naga who could converse in Konyak, and after a year's stay in a Konyak village my Lhota servants had picked up hardly a dozen Konyak phrases. Though I recorded the outline of a grammar and a vocabulary of the dialect spoken in Wakching as well as a great number of texts, my knowledge of the language remained very superficial and throughout my work I conversed in Naga-Assamese, the *lingua franca* of the Naga Hills. It was also in this language that the texts of songs were translated to me, and I have little doubt that the translations are no more satisfactory than would be, say, a translation of Li-tai-po's poems through the medium of pidgin English. In many cases it was impossible to ascertain the exact meaning of a word or a phrase, and this was not only due to the limitations of Naga-Assamese, but also to the fact that the poetical language of the Konyaks is very different from the idiom in daily use. And just as the spoken language varies from village to village so greatly that within a radius of ten miles one may find three distinct dialects, so too differ the poetical idioms not only of villages, but even of individual *morung* or men's houses, the main social units of Konyak villages. Thus many songs are fully understandable only to a limited circle and even the singers can often not explain the meaning of each word. 'This is the way we sing,' they say, 'but in speaking we never use these words, and we cannot tell what exactly they mean.'

If yet I attempt to give an English rendering of a few Konyak songs, it is more to convey an idea of the function of poetry in Konyak life, than to demonstrate their aesthetic qualities. The songs not only reflect the Konyak's attitude to many aspects of life, they are the principal and recognized medium through which the individual as well as the group express their most intense emotions. At an early age Konyak boys and girls receive their first training in singing; they are taught not so much by their parents, but by the older members of their *morung* (men's house) or *yo* (girl's dormitory). All the great feasts are occasions for singing, and every night the boys visit the girls in their dormitories and there they spend hours in singing and friendly talk. Small boys of eight or ten already join in these visits, but they return later in the evening to their own *morung*, while the older boys stay on in the girls' dormitory or seek the secrecy of a granary on the outskirts of the village where they can be alone with their loves. And when at dusk the young people return from work on the fields,

they assemble on the raised platforms specially built for this purpose at all the entrances to the village: boys and girls, leaning affectionately against each other, sing alternative songs, which though following traditional lines and couched in archaic poetical language, are often spontaneous compositions. Boys and girls sing in turn, each vying with the other in appropriate responses and their verses, sometimes sentimental, sometimes taunting, always play on the inexhaustible theme of love. Many songs are straightforward descriptions of the usual occurrences in the Konyak's daily life, and make to us, who are denied the full appreciation of their poetical language, no very great appeal. Such a song is the following:<sup>1</sup>

To the village, to the girl's house,	Dzingy ang wang-lang
To our girl friends, we go.	Umai-lan ;
Of food we don't think,	Ha-hu ying-mai
Of drink we don't think;	Beta-lang ;
For love alone we have come;	Yayang yung-lei ghei-yi ;
Walking we come,	Dzo-dza ngoi hebu-e,
Walking we go.	Dzem-ten-bu-u, dzem-lei lang.

This song needs no explanation; the boys of the *morung*, which lies usually near one of the village-gates, go through the village to a dormitory of girls belonging to another *morung*-group. Usually they are welcome, but sometimes they find the hospitable girls entertaining young men of another village. Such a situation is depicted in the following song:

Our girl friends	Mai-lan
The red berries of the <i>ben</i> tree,	Ben tak
Many berries on the branches.	Gu-dza liek.
Porcupine and hedgehog,	Lei hi hai
Come to eat the berries.	Dzoung ma shei.
From the Dikhu valley, from the far-off land,	Yang-tang hing-ba,
Small hornbills come,	Ngep-hi
Great hornbills come,	Wa-ne
High in the tree-tops they eat the berries.	Gang-ma phak.
We, boys of our <i>morung</i>	Shim-lan
We, like the <i>yuki</i> birds,	Yuki ngoi-yo
When we come all fruits are eaten,	Gang-mei yong,
Stripped are the branches,	Liek weng-phei-dzo
On the naked branches.	Dzang-geang
We cry and weep.	Mei-yong.

<sup>1</sup>This song and the song on p. 74 are recorded in the language of Namsang; all other songs are in the language of Wakching.

Here the red berries are a symbol for the girls, and porcupine and hedgehog, animals difficult to tackle, as well as the hornbills who come from across the Dikhu, a river near Wakching, represent the visitors who have monopolized all the girls of the dormitory; the boys compare themselves to *yuki* birds, small birds of about the size of a minah, which cannot stand up to the more powerful hornbills.

Once the boys are in the dormitory and sit in the bamboo benches by a pleasant fire, their arms round the waists of their girl friends, the songs become more direct. Here they address themselves to the girls whom they court:

Girls of the other *morung*  
O, our friends,  
In your mother's hand  
Money and jewels;  
In your husband's hand  
Little or nothing.  
Once you have borne  
Two or three children  
Gone is the beauty of your  
body.

Love your friends,  
Love the friends of your  
youth.

Nia-yanau-bhang  
Mai-lan-ou  
Him-nung yak-ma  
Ngin-hi khem ;  
Nang-tui yak-ma  
Shang yau-li.  
Ha-moi ni-ai  
Lim-shum,  
Gou-ma dzem-hi dzing.

Ou-mai lan-ton.  
Dzim-ya yange-e.

And a girl may answer :

When you are with me  
Your tears flow  
When you are with your wife

You smile and laugh.  
Why, leaving your wife,  
Have you come to me ?

Her you love more  
Than the friends of your  
youth.

E-nam me-dzi,  
Phiwei-long  
Nang-gam phong-hui tui-  
phong la-ma,  
Ni-hi nio.  
Dui-shim dou-pha  
Ngoi-hei yang-mon enam-  
ton ?  
Dui-lin hung-bu  
We-tang mai-lan.

Before marriage boys and girls are free to have as many love-affairs as they choose, provided they do not offend against the rule of exogamy. Even with marriage this happy state does not necessarily end, for the girl remains in the house of her parents and may still grant her favours to any young man. If, as so often happens, she marries the man of her choice, she will continue spending her nights with him, but if the marriage is arranged by her family she is entitled to show her husband the cold shoulder and every evening still meets her old friends and lovers. Even when she

becomes pregnant she need not withdraw from the girls' dormitory and the society of the young men, and it is only after the birth of her first child that she goes to the house of her husband, who is, under any circumstances, considered the child's legal father. Now the young wife is expected to change her entire mode of life; she has to live in her husband's house and to desist from flirtations with her former boy-friends, she no longer goes to work with the gangs of young girls, but devotes herself to the work on her husband's fields.

Young men, whether unmarried or married, enjoy a freedom corresponding to that of the girls; in their case too the birth of their wife's first child marks the end of a phase, but the change over to a more settled life is often not quite as sudden and though public opinion does not approve of marital infidelity, many a husband whose wife has come to live under his roof still spends an occasional evening in the girls' dormitory.

In the first of these songs the boys urge their girl friends to be faithful to the lovers of their youth; the 'money and jewels in the mother's hand' signify the happy life under the parental roof and this is contrasted with the drudgery in the husband's house. Konyak girls are proud of their beautiful bodies, and the allusion to the fading of their beauty after the birth of two or three children is designed to make married life appear even less desirable. The evident fact that just the 'love of their friends' is likely to bring on pregnancy and the dreaded parting from the youths' company is conveniently overlooked.

But many of the boys who paint so dull a picture of married life are themselves married, though they may still go their own way, and in the second of the songs a girl teases her love for his alleged attachment to his wife. The first four lines may be interpreted in two ways: the 'tears' and the 'laughter' may simply be ironical over-statements of the greater happiness the boy is supposed to find in his wife's company, or they may mean, 'when you are with me you cry for my love, but when you are with your wife you make fun of me.'

Apart from these lover's songs there are songs composed round famous and often legendary events. They are usually short, sketching in a few terse verses occurrences sufficiently well known to need no further description. The incestuous love of a brother and sister is the subject of such a poem:

Yinglong and Liwang  
They loved each other  
Loving, they lay together,  
Red as the leaf of the *ou-bou*  
tree  
Flamed love and desire.

Yinglong Liwang  
Mau-he mai-dzing  
Dzongbu-e  
Ou-bou yak dak  
Mei-ma shang-phung  
Nai-bu-yang

On paths to the village.  
 The two lit fires,  
 Sky-wards, upwards curling,  
 The smoke of the fires united,  
 And mingled, never to part.

Be-dzong,  
 I-me wen-do-huk  
 Wang-ku ling-gang,  
 Mei-dzi wen-yong  
 Nei-i-pong yei-yan  
 Be-dzu yingom be-lei.

Brother-sister incest is to the Konyak the greatest of all social crimes, but it is, as we see here, not lacking romantic associations. In this poem the love of Yinglong and her brother Liwang is not condemned but idealized. Happy fulfilment of so unorthodox a passion was evidently impossible, and the lovers had to die; but before dying they lit fires on two paths leading in opposite directions from the village of Wakching and the smoke rising in two columns met and mingled over the village, and in the smoke the lovers were for ever united.

Another type of song hummed by the boys as they sit round the fires in their *morung* and play on their single-stringed bamboo fiddles, or return with the girls from the fields, are those which comment on everyday life. Here a boy contrasts his own accustomed bed in the *morung* with the unfamiliar sleeping place for which he has to search when visiting another village:

At night time,  
 At sleeping time,  
 From the *morung* calls my  
     bed.  
 Searching, searching,  
 A sleeping place,  
 For a bed I have to search.

Shiyen ming-shei yak-bu  
 Wang-a shiyen-ha,  
 Shin-shing ngie-niok phong-  
     weng lieng-ei.  
 Lem-nieng yang shi-bu  
 Mei-ghei yui-yui  
 Shing-shung lung-hem  
     wang.

A curious gap in the range of Konyak songs is the absence of working chants. Nagas of most other tribes sing at work on the fields or when carrying loads, and in the Angami country at planting time the work-songs of boys and girls resound from all the rice-terraces and fill the valleys from morning to evening. The Konyaks, on the other hand, do not sing at work: when they drag in a huge house-pole it is to rhythmic yells and shouts, and young people weeding the hill-crops will break into cascades of laughter and shrieks, but never into song.

Very different from songs sung by individuals or small groups of boys or girls in the intimate atmosphere of a peaceful evening in men's house or girls' dormitory, are the dance-songs often chanted by the full complement of a *morung* from the youngest boy to the eldest warrior who can still swing a dao and bend his knees in the rhythm of the festive round-dance. For the Konyak

his *morung* is the most important social and political unit, more vital in its manifold functions than the clan, and more firmly organized than the village. In all the Konyak villages run on democratic lines—and it is with them and not the group of Konyaks ruled by autocratic chiefs that we are here concerned—each *morung* stands politically alone; it may engage on feuds and conclude alliances with *morung* of neighbouring villages in which the other *morung* of its own village take no part, and it is no unusual event to find that the traditional friends and allies of one *morung* of a village are actually at war with another *morung* of the same village. Although the *morung* of a village are complementary in so far as they are inter-marrying units and their members perform for each other various traditional services, there exists usually a keen rivalry between the different *morung* of a village, and every man takes a great pride in the reputation and glory of his own *morung*, always emphasizing its pre-eminence. This pride in one's own *morung* is expressed in numerous songs praising the might and prowess of its mythical or historical founders.

Thus the men of the Oukheang *morung* of Wakching, whos-claim that their *morung* is the oldest in the villages seems not without foundation, sing the praise of the sons of Yana and Shayong, their legendary ancestors :

O, since earth, water and rocks  
existed,

We are the sons of Yong-wem-  
ou-niu

O, may the boys be healthy and  
strong

May they live together united.

O, man and tiger, the sons of  
brothers

They ate of the jungle pig's  
flesh.

O, as so many stars,

As the sun rises,

The sun in the sky,

O, Yana and Shayong's sons

So high are they in the sky.

O, like the high trees

Like the virgin forest,

O, Yana and Shayong's sons,

Great are they on the earth.

A, hadai yeang-long nou-  
wei

Yong-wem-ou-niu hu,

A, meidzei dzim-men mei-  
yei,

Mei-long bhan dzang toa.

E, ou-ma dzi mei baha

La-wan ba-mei ha.

A, ya-hi bang-bu sha-wang  
lang

E, nian pathong she-pu

Wang-he ye-sho-niu

E, Yana Shayong-hu

Ni wang-kau-niu ma-niem

E, tuki hi-tong she-pu

Ying-ya long bhang-a

E, Yana Sha yong-hu

Ni dza-bhan tok mei-niem.

O, like the lightning  
 Flashing through the darkness  
 O, where the waters meet,  
 At Dzei-lao stream  
 Like the roll of thunder.  
 O, like a gong resounding  
 So walked Yana and Shayong's  
 sons.

E, ou-ying gha-la  
 Hung-ma niak.  
 E, yeang-shei Dzei-lao  
 Phong-ma kung.  
 E, weng-dzang weng-e.  
 Ham-bu Yana Shayong-hu.

O, Yana and Shayong's sons,  
 Such is their greatness and  
 might;  
 O, all their off-spring  
 Filled the whole village.

E, Yana Shayong-hu  
 Ni ha-lan oma ha;  
 E, bhang-bu moi-bhai  
 Hem-bu wu-shei ching-towa.

In this song we find a trait typical of most Konyak poetry: tales are not described but only alluded to; the song is not designed to inform the listeners, but to recall certain facts, well known to all, and thus to create a particular atmosphere; here one of pride in the greatness of the ancestors and *morung*-founders. To those unfamiliar with the ancient traditions such a song is necessarily ununderstandable, while to the Konyak it is pregnant with meaning. The first two lines refer to the mythical origin of the Konyak tribe, whose ancestors were born of the giant bird Yong-wem-ou-niu, while the next two lines are an invocation for the prosperity of the *morung*-boys and the harmony of their community life. The fifth and sixth lines again lead us into the realm of legend and recall in a minimum of words the following story:

In the old times man and tiger were friends and kinsmen; the man had one field and the tiger another. Once wild pigs damaged the tiger's crops and so the two chased and killed one of the marauders. When they had cut it up, the man began cooking the meat, but while he cooked the pork for himself, he prepared a dish of bitter roots for the tiger. The tiger wondered at the taste and when the man turned to blow his nose he took a piece of the man's food and found it very tasty. In anger he turned on the man: 'Why do you eat good meat when you give me only horrible bitter food!' he said. At his friend's anger, the man ran away and when the tiger chased him he sought refuge in a hole in the ground. Only the end of his cane-belt remained sticking out. So the tiger pulled at the belt; but the belt was very long and unwound as the tiger pulled; at last the tiger got tired and went away.

In a Pardhan song this story might easily be elaborated into a hundred verses, but the Konyaks, bent on arousing emotional associations rather than on amusing an audience, are content to

indicate the mythical background in exactly six words.

The second part of the song is devoted to the praise of the descendants of Yana and Shayong, the ancestors of the two most important clans of the Oukheang *morung*, which still bear the names Yana-hu and Shayong-hu;<sup>1</sup> they are likened to stars and sun, and to the high trees of the virgin forest, and their coming from a certain place near the confluence of two rivers, which lies on the traditional migration route of the Wakching people—a route along which also the path of the Dead is believed to run—is described as accompanied by lightning and thunder, while their steps resounded like the ringing of gongs. The last lines emphasize the greatness of the clans which filled the whole village.

Just as the Konyaks sing the praise of their own *morung* during the communal dances, so do they delight in heaping scorn on the members of rival *morung*. The following taunt song is sung by the men of the Balang *morung*, which belongs to the *morung*-groups opposite to the exogamous group formed by the Oukheang and Thepong *morung*; it is the men of the latter two *morung* who come in for ridicule;

Wakching, greatest of all	Them shem wang-yong hung-
villages,	yu dzing.
With the shells of the ears	Shong-ma, ben-ma
With the drums of the ears	Lang-ngei,
Hear, O hear our song.	Phang-dzem pha.
O villagers, O commoners,	Dzing-yang, ben-ha
O chieftains, hear our song.	Wang-nau.
Prick your ears like the ears of	Sheang-gui na-lon lan.
dogs,	
Like the long, long ears of dogs.	

Those commoners plotting	Dzing-ha tai-shang,
The destruction of villages	Ben-lan hang-lien,
What work have they done ?	Yang-ya-ei ?
On the cross-road,	Be-na lem-phong
At the rubber-tree,	Nie-dzong dzi-ma,
In the morning they swore an	Ham-dzin nep,
oath;	
Alone they found the Kongan	Shen-tho phem-dza mang-
men,	shi,
And yet they took to flight	Bet-dou yan-bu dzing.
Where the Phei-wang river flows.	Phei-wang wen-niu yen-dou.

<sup>1</sup> Yana and Shayong are personal names, while the syllable —*hu* means sons or descendants; it is not quite clear why in the song which refers evidently to the sons of both the original clan-ancestors the suffix *hu* is added only to the name of Shayong; perhaps it is done for the sake of the rhythm, but I failed to inquire about that point when recording the song.



Search for your mother's carry- Hem-nung bag lem-mei,  
ing bands

Hold on to the shelves above Phou deam sha-ma dzu-  
your hearths \*dzei.

Hanging there, weep and cry U-wan a-niu hei.  
for your mothers.

Those destroyers of villages, Dzing-ha thai-sheang,  
What work have they done? Wan-dei hang-ling.

This song refers to an abortive raid undertaken by the men of the Oukheang and Thepong *morung* on the village of Kongan, which in poetical language is called Shen-tho. The unsuccessful raiders are referred to as 'commoners,' because all the members of these two *morung* belong to *ben*-clans, while the leaders and several clans of the opposite *morung*-group are of chiefly rank and blood. The men of Oukheang and Thepong had apparently gathered at a certain cross-road below their *morung* and sworn to raid and burn Kongan; but when they arrived at the village their courage faltered and when the Kongan men, who were alone and unsupported by any allies, put up a stout opposition, they fled across the Phei-wang stream between Kongan and Wakching. In the last part of the song it is suggested that the disgraced raiders should hang themselves by the carrying-bands<sup>1</sup> of their mothers or hold on to the bamboo shelves that hang suspended from the rafters over all hearth fires, and cry for their mothers like terrified children.

While in this taunting song the event singled out for ridicule is described in broad outline, there are other songs which allude to the event in a minimum of words and are consequently understandable only to the initiated. The following two songs may serve as example :

O Dzu-hu, O Dzek-ben  
Their brothers' temples  
To cut with *dao*  
This we taught them.

E, Dzu-hu Dzek-ben,  
Nau-du ming-te  
Bohun-niu.

O Keangdzing,  
Great chief's brother,  
Squashed by the drum,  
He lay dying.

E, Keangdzing,  
Ang-dzei yong-a,  
Sham-lep lei-ma at.

Both these songs are sung by Wakching men in derision of the alleged—and in Wakching proverbial—stupidity of the people of Wanching, a neighbouring village. Although Wanching was founded by kinsmen of the founders of Wakching, the people of

<sup>1</sup> Broad plaited bands worn round the forehead by which back-loads are supported.

Wakching claim that they have frequently made fun of their simple minded neighbours and the stories alluded to in the above songs are typical of the many tricks played on the Wanching men:

Once upon a time the Wanching men inquired from the Wakching people how they should set about cutting their hair. Now the Konyak custom is to hold a *dao* with its back to the forehead, arrange the hair over the sharp edge, and then tap along the edge with a piece of wood, thus evenly clipping off the tips. But the malicious men of Wakching told their neighbours to place the *dao* with its sharp edge against the forehead and hit against the back of the axe with a heavy mallet—the unfortunate Wanching men literally followed the instructions: the *dao* cut the hair, but also the heads of all those who submitted to this method of hair-cutting, and many died at the hands of their well-meaning friends and brothers.

Another time the Wanching men wanted to make a log-drum<sup>1</sup> and they asked their neighbours' advice. The Wakching men told them that they should choose a big tree, and while three or four men felled it all the others should support the trunk. Again the evil advice was followed and the tree in falling squashed the chief's brother Keangdzing and many of the others who had in vain tried to hold it up.

Dance poems in praise of the founders of a *morung* or of warrior's exploits are sung only by the members of that particular *morung*. But apart from such compositions there exist songs which, though of a more general character, are regarded as the property of individual *morung* and any infringement of 'copyright' is fiercely resisted. We have mentioned already that even within one linguistic area there are certain differences in the poetic language of the various *morung*, and once a dance-song has been composed by the men of one *morung* they watch jealously lest the young men of any other *morung* appropriate the composition. Innumerable quarrels have arisen over the proprietary rights on songs and the only time I saw the Wakching men come to blows was when during the great spring festival the young men of the Ang-bau *morung* performed a dance to a song and rhythm belonging to the Oukheang. The provocation was all the greater since they danced to the disputed song in front of the Oukheang under the eyes of its lawful owners. The Oukheang men were not slow to interrupt the dance and the ensuing fight completely wrecked the ceremonies of that evening. Some years previously a dispute that began over the rights in a particular song led to man-slaughter

<sup>1</sup>One of the huge wooden gongs, sometimes as much as 15 feet long, found in all Konyak villages.

and resulted finally in the expulsion of a whole *morung* from Wakching<sup>1</sup>.

The violence of emotions aroused by the unlawful appropriation of a dance song is proof of the enormous importance which the Konyak attaches to his songs, both those that are traditional and those newly composed. As in the lyric poems sung in the intimacy of the girls' dormitory or on the sitting-platforms on a moonlight night when the Konyak pours forth all the joys and longings of his heart, so his pride in his *morung* and the heroic feats of his ancestors, and the vital feeling of solidarity between all the members of his *morung*—the only 'patriotic' sentiment the Konyak knows—find expression in the dance songs which are claimed as the property of individual groups; love-songs and lyric poems, though sometimes also composed and favoured in one particular *morung*, are the common property of all Konyak youth, and it is these songs which fill the happiest hours of every boy and girl through the years of gay comradeship and romantic love-affairs. To us who are still ignorant of the delicate shades of the Konyak's poetical language, they may appear artless, but to the Konyak themselves they are the flowers in a garden of enchantment.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Morung System of the Konyak Nagas*, loc. cit., p. 366.

## EPILOGUE

TO W. G. ARCHER

We have now been discussing Indian folk-poetry with one another for so many years that, in the familiar manner of Auden and MacNeice's *Letters from Iceland*, a letter seems the appropriate way of adding a few footnotes to your comment and the poems.

In the first place I hope our readers are not going to regard this as a sort of book about Folk-poetry. We have less than a hundred pages and this has meant that we have had to leave many things out. The most obvious of these, of course, is the absence of any reference to long poems. Yet these, we will be told, are perhaps the most characteristic of village songs and were the first to attract the attention of Western observers. In the seventies of the last century, for example, the Rev. Stephen Hislop took down from 'a Pardhan priest of the Gondas at Nagpur' in the Gondi language the first splendid version of the great legend of Lingo, which was later edited, translated and published by Sir Richard Temple. In the Punjab the adventures of the hero Raja Rasalu also attracted attention. Temple's version of the Lingo song is vigorous and often beautiful, though the poetic inspiration as in most narrative poems (and in none more than in Tennyson and Masfield) is diffused, making quotation difficult. But the following description of a rice field in the rains and the visit of a herd of nilgai has been admired:

On the first day of the rainy season a little black cloud appeared  
Wind blew violently; it was cloudy all day; rain began to fall.  
Rills in the open places were filled knee-deep; all the holes  
were filled with water.

When the rain had poured for three days, the weather became  
fair; rice began to spring;

All the fields appeared green. In one day the rice grew a  
finger's breadth high;

In a month it rose up to a man's knee.

There were sixteen score nilgai

Among whom two bucks, uncle and nephew, were chiefs.

When the scent of rice spread around, they came to know it;  
Thither they went to graze.

At the head of the herd was the uncle, and the nephew was  
at the rear.

With crackling joints the nephew arose; he leaped upwards.  
With two ears upright and with cheerful heart, he bounded  
towards his uncle.

He gave a bound, and was in the midst of the rice,

And stood; then all the deer came after him leaping.  
All the deer were eating rice.

Shortly afterwards, the otherwise excellent Captain Forsyth was mistaken enough to turn this great poem into the metre of *Hiawatha*, which he seems to have admired, a version which will remain among the curiosities of folk-song.

And our Lingo redivivus  
Wandered on until the night fell.  
Screamed the panther in the forest,  
Growled the bear upon the mountain,  
And our Lingo then bethought him  
Of their cannibal propensities....

Mahadeo  
Came and saw that bed of prickles  
Where our Lingo lay unmoving,  
Asked him what the little game was....

During my recent field-work in Bastar and the Central Provinces I have been greatly struck by the prominence of two types of lengthy folk-song. One is the heroic epic or legendary ballad, such as the many versions of the Lingo story, the tales of Siri Somni and Phulsonder Raja, and the long Ghotul Pata in Bastar, and the heroic legends of Hirakhan Kshattri and Marakhan Kshattri sung by Pardhan minstrels in Mandla and Balaghat. You yourself have often told me of the long Ahir Saga of Lorik and the Musahar epic of Dina and Badri, which flourish in Bihar. The other type of narrative poem is the much simpler song recited by Gond women during the Parrot Dance or during the tedious business of weeding the fields. Some of these throw an exceptionally strong light on the conditions of aboriginal domestic life.

Other types of folk-song about which we have had little or nothing to say in this number are children's and cradle songs (which are often delightful, but generally need to be studied in original for their full flavour), songs of love and labour, political songs (which a wise Government would do well to study), songs of death and mourning, songs of pregnancy and the growth of crops (which lend themselves naturally to the progressive type of song), and above all religious poetry. The subjective character of the Indian genius has made its religious poetry perhaps the best in the world, but aboriginal religious verse is in my experience pedestrian and uninspired. But the folk-poetry of the Bhaktas of Maharashtra might well have been studied. I believe that poets like Tukaram

and Namdev based not a little of their work on the village songs among which they had grown up. We have no songs from the United Provinces. Many have been recorded, but few have been well translated in English. Shirreff's versions, for example, depart too far and too obviously from the originals. Again, Bengal, is absent. There are, of course, Dinesh Chandra Sen's monumental *Eastern Bengal Ballads*, but little Bengali folk-poetry has so far been translated well. Here too, however, I believe that much of Tagore's work grew out of the songs of the countryside. I also very much regret that we have not been able to lay our hands on any really satisfactory versions of Toda songs, which have recently been studied by Dr. Emeneau.

I agree with you about the printing of original versions, largely because the only satisfactory way of doing so is in the original script. The Roman script, not being phonetic, is ill-adapted for the purpose. But I doubt if the originals authenticate the translations; if anyone wants to fake a poem, he can fake an original as well. The great value of the originals is to show the real form and rhythm of the poetry and to preserve and extend its use among the folk. I see that in the very early *Folk-Songs of Southern India* (1871), C. E. Gover omits them because 'few readers would be able to follow more than a small portion of the originals, and the rest would be so much waste paper' and because 'it will be better in every way to have a complete series of the songs and poems than to allow an important literature to continue represented by a few examples.'

The regular ethnographical tradition represented by Haddon, Rivers, and Seligman has always, as Malinowski points out, 'tried to quote verbatim statements of crucial importance. They also adduce terms of native classification, sociological, psychological and industrial termini technici, and have rendered the verbal contour of native thought as precisely as possible.' There has recently been something of a reaction against this habit; for example, Schapera in his *Married Life in an African Tribe* says, 'I have not followed the practice, now so commonly adopted by anthropologists, of quoting statements in the original text as well as in translation. There may be some justification for this practice where the language of the people has not yet been studied, or where the writer wishes to direct special attention to some linguistic usage; but in my reading I have generally found it more annoying than helpful, especially where it serves no obvious purpose other than to lend an air of greater authority to what is said.' And Geoffrey Gorer gives no Lepcha texts in his *Himalayan Village*. 'I am unable,' he says, 'to understand the reasoning of those anthropologists who consider that the inclusion in an English book of sentences in a language which not one reader

can understand gives the study greater scientific or objective value.' Gorer considered that the value of texts was almost entirely linguistic and, therefore, deposited some selected stories and prose along with a Lepcha vocabulary with the School of Oriental Languages, London. This seems to me the best way. But it is, as you say, the original text must be preserved and either published or deposited in some School of Languages. The matter is an entirely practical one. Can we combine in a single moment the study of poetry, sociology and linguistics? I think to add the very specialized linguistic study demands too much of all but a small handful of readers. I can illustrate this from my own experience. For twenty years I have had in my possession a copy of a little book *Italian Poets Chiefly Before Dante*, which gives both the Italian texts and opposite them verse translations by D. G. Rossetti. There is a lot of very beautiful poetry here but in all these years I have never been able to enjoy it in either Italian or English, for whenever I have opened the book I have become engrossed in what you have rightly called 'a linguistic puzzle.'

I entirely agree, of course, with your statement of the principles of translation. It would have been a good thing for the reputation of Indian verse throughout the world, had such principles been adopted long ago. For on the whole, the translations of classical Indian poetry do not reach the standard of the work done on Arabian, Chinese or Japanese verse. The majority of the translators such as Griffith, R. W. Dutt, Sir Edwin Arnold, attempted mainly to produce good poetry in a rhyme and rhythm familiar to Western readers, with the result that in many cases neither the exact sense of the original nor its form was reproduced. So far as I know, there have been no attempts (except perhaps by Macdonell and Ryder) to do what Louise Hammond has done for Chinese poetry, that is, to reproduce the exact rhyme and rhythm of the originals. The work of E. Powys Mathers stands by itself. His astonishingly beautiful version of the *Chaurapanchasika* is rather an interpretation than a translation.

Dr. and Mrs. Seligman translated their Vedda songs into prose, and Mr. Parry did the same for his often beautiful Lakher songs. I think the first considerable attempt to translate Indian originals into free verse is in the anthology and works quoted in this number of *Man in India*. It is an entirely new movement in Indo-English studies, and I believe it has great possibilities.

I can illustrate the general reaction to this by incidents in my own experience. My friend Mr. Laurence Housman considered that the songs in *Songs of the Forest* would have been better had they rhymed. He took the following poem in that book:

The wind and the rain are beating down  
 Take shelter or your clothes will be drenched  
 The rain is falling, falling

In all my dreams I searched for you  
 But I did not find even the echo of your steps.

I have built a fence by the roadside  
 I have made a fence for my garden  
 Where have you hidden, thief of my heart ?

In all my dreams I searched for you  
 But I did not find even the echo of your steps.

I have cut tall bamboos; I have cut short bamboos  
 Large are the hollows of the dwarf bamboos  
 The thief who couched behind my fence has hidden in those hollows

In all my dreams I searched for you  
 But I did not find even the echo of your steps.

This is Mr. Housman's version :

The wind and rain are beating down,  
 Come in, don't drown ! Take shelter, do !  
 The rain, the rain; O hear it beat !  
 In all my dreams I searched for you  
 But could not find one trace again,  
 Or hear the echo of your feet.

Between my garden and the track  
 I built a wall, I fenced it round,  
 I made it safe as holy ground.  
 O loved, O lost, come back, come back.  
 Thief of my Heart ! I search for you,  
 I search, and still no footprint meet,  
 Nor hear the echo of your feet.

I built my wall of tall bamboo,  
 Of tall, and short, with hollow stem;  
 And in the hollow where they grew  
 The hidden thief lay crouched in them.  
 Now all my dreams I search for you,  
 And up and down the world I beat ;  
 Rain beating on the tall bamboo  
 Has drowned the echo of your feet.

Again in *The Baiga* appears the following:

In the midst of the river, the tree is full of leaves  
 Among the leaves, monkeys are hiding—



They are eating the fruit that grows there  
 O when will I meet my true love  
 Who will put aside the leaves  
 And pluck the oranges that grow  
 So round and firm upon my tree?

Mr. Housman versified this as:

On an island in the river is a tree full of leaves;  
 And deep in among them, the monkeys, little thieves,  
 Come stealing the fruit which is hiding there below—  
 The fruit that hangs waiting there for thee.  
 O when will my love come, and drive away the thieves,  
 And climb into the branches, and push aside the leaves,  
 And pluck from their shadows the oranges that grow.  
 So full, and firm, and round upon my tree?

In a review of *The Baiga* in *The Illustrated London News*, Sir John Squire complained about 'the all sorts of nuances of meaning and rhythm' that are lost in translating from one language to another, and said that 'If a learned Baiga translated Burns's

My love is like a red, red rose  
 That's newly blown in spring

it would probably appear as—

The maiden of my choice is like a scarlet rose  
 Which has just come out at the right time—

which isn't quite the same thing.' But I doubt if this is really true; rhythm of course will be lost, but a good translator should be able, especially if he is working in free verse, to preserve all the nuances of meaning and shades of emphasis.

The dangers into which a use of rhyme can lead a translator are well illustrated by one of the first Indian folk-songs to be put into English, by Colonel Dalton who undoubtedly had the spirit and the tongue of a true poet. This is a 'close imitation' of a song sung 'by a rockbroken stream with wooded banks, the girls on one side, the lads on the other, singing to the accompaniment of the babbling brook in true bucolic style.'

#### BOYS

A kanchan flower bring to us  
 We'll listen whilst you sing to us

#### GIRLS

We'll gather greens for dinner, dear,  
 But cannot think of singing here.

## BOYS

A handful that of chaff and straw,  
Us boys you surely beat at jaw!

## GIRLS (pouting)

Ah! birds that chirp and fly away  
With us you care not then to stay?

## BOYS (amorous)

Yes, yes, we've caught some pretty fish,  
To part, dear girls, is not our wish.

## GIRLS (pleased)

The clouds disperse, the day looks fair,  
Come back then lads our homes to share.

## BOYS

No! by the bar tree blossom! But  
You come with us and share our hut.

## GIRLS

The birds sing merrily, we agree  
To leave pa ma and go with thee.

There is one danger of free verse, however, the danger that we should alter the form too much. The tendency is to make the English version shorter and simpler than the original, almost as if there were Indian Hokku or Tanka. This gives a wrong impression, but apart from that, I can think of nothing which is not a gain.

The neglect, both by scientists and artists, of the Indian folk-song is astonishing. For a long time only religious and didactic verses were recorded. Gover admits that he dared not translate erotica, and speaks of 'a learned and estimable missionary who has been publicly condemned because he would faithfully translate a noble poem without a really impure thought in it, and was therefore compelled to commit the awful crime of likening a woman's bosom to a pomegranate.' In Eunice Tietjens' lovely anthology, *The Poetry of the Orient*, not a single folk-song has been anthologised. I have turned over thousands of pages of the great volumes of the Ethnographic Survey, Thurston, Risley, Enthoven, Anantakrishna Iyer, Russell and Hiralal—these are books of the dark half of the month: the light of the moon of verse does not shine through them. But consider how songs illuminate, not only with their beauty but with their exact and authentic information the pages of, say, Malinowski and Firth.

If you would know the story of my life  
Then listen to my Karma songs,

sings a Gond poet. The songs are the true doorway to his heart, a window from which his whole life may be surveyed.

There is an abominable movement, fostered chiefly by self-conscious and communal-minded associations of semi-educated aboriginals, to stop song and dance in the mountains and forests of India. I would call on every lover of art and beauty, every admirer of the ballet, everyone who believes in life and rhythm and freedom, to oppose this movement. Already over a great part of aboriginal India has fallen the dark and gloomy shadow of the Puritan 'reformer' and the missionary of whatever faith. It should be a criminal offence to rob people of their recreations. To steal a song is far worse than to steal gold. To laugh at, to make people ashamed of their dances, their ornaments, their singing is a great wickedness. For this the schools are often guilty; in Bastar boys who have been to school become too proud to dance or sing. It is essential that the educational departments of the Provincial Governments should encourage the folk-dance and the folk-song through their schools before it is too late.

So long as song and dance is free, village women get a square deal. With the coming of a taboo on their dancing, comes also a restriction of their freedom, the decay of their morals, the loss of rights.

We would do well to ponder the reasons given by Alfred Williams for the disappearance of the folk-song in England. 'The dearth, or, at any rate, the restricting of the fairs, and, consequently, of the opportunities of disseminating the ballad-sheets is one cause of its decline. The closing of many of the old village inns, the discontinuance of the harvest-home and other farm feasts, the suspension and decay of May games, morris dancing, church festivals, wassailing, and mumming are other obvious reasons. Another factor was the advent of the church organ and the breaking-up of the old village bands of musicians.

'Another reason for the disappearance of the folk-song is that the life and condition of things in the villages, and throughout the whole countryside, have vastly changed of late. Education has played its part. The instruction given to the children at village schools proved antagonistic to the old minstrelsy. Dialect and homely language were discountenanced. Teachers were imported from the towns, and they had little sympathy with village life and customs. The words and spirit of the songs were misunderstood, and the tunes were counted too simple. The construction of railways, the linking up of villages with other districts and contact with large towns and cities had an immediate and

permanent effect upon the minstrelsy of the countryside. Many of the village labourers migrated to the towns, or to the colonies, and most of them no longer cared for the old ballads, or were too busily occupied to remember them. At the same time, the singing of the old songs went on as long as the fairs and harvest-homes were held, and even after they were discontinued, till they began to be rigidly discountenanced, or altogether forbidden at the inns. This was the most unkind and fatal repulse of all. It was chiefly brought about, I am told, not by any desire of the landlord, but by the harsh and strict supervision of the police. They practically forbade singing. The houses at which it was held, *i.e.*, those at which the poor labourers commonly gathered, were marked as disorderly places; the police looked upon song-singing as a species of rowdyism. Their frequent complaints and threats to the landlords filled them with misgivings; the result was that they were forced, as a means of self-protection, to request their customers not to sing on the premises, or, at any rate, not to allow themselves to be heard. The crestfallen and disappointed labourers accordingly held their peace. The songs, since they could no longer be sung in public, were relegated to oblivion; hundreds have completely died out, and will be heard no more. The gramophone and the cinema have about completed the work of destruction, and finally sealed the doom of the folk-song and ballad as they were commonly known."

We are still at the beginning. We need first authoritative collections of songs in every Province; we need selections of these for use in schools; we need translations and interpretations in order that the deep and noble heart of village India may be known to the Occidental world. Research is needed into the technique of the songs, into their meaning interpreted in relation to dream and omen symbolism, into their relationship with the folk-tales. The poetry of charms and mantras should be investigated. And above all, of course, we should search and search for the pure gold of poetic beauty and try to express it in fitting words.

Yours ever  
VERRIER ELWIN

27-2-43.

Patangarh,

Dindori Tahsil, Mandla District, C.P.

# INDIAN ETHNOLOGY IN CURRENT PERIODICAL LITERATURE

*The Folk-Lore* in its Vol. LIII, June issue, has published the Presidential Address delivered by Dr. Hutton before the Annual Meeting of the Folk-Lore Society at London on 30th April 1942.

The learned President dealt with the "*Nature and Sources of Folk-belief*." He has opined that normally folk-belief arises from tradition and the latter is derived from accurate or inaccurate memory, intentional or unintentional false testimony and inferences. Social surroundings and influence, inherited fears and emotions, and erroneous inferences from custom and rites (the original meaning having been lost) are also responsible for folk-belief. In support of this theory, besides giving many examples from Europe and Africa, he has given many instances from Assam tribes, which will interest the Indian readers, because similar beliefs are found among other aborigines of India, especially about the pre-historic stone axes.

Mr. Elwin has contributed an illustrated article entitled '*A Pair of Drums, with Wooden Figures, from Bastar State, India*' in September-October issue of '*MAN*' 1942. The pair of drums represent the boy and girl member of the Muria dormitory, where they are kept, and each drum is made out of a single piece of wood and carried by the Muria boys, when they go out on ceremonial dancing tours. It would have created much interest among the readers to know whether the peculiar drums are merely carried as toys or the Murias attach any magical influence to them.

*The Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society* in its Vol. XIII, Nos. 3 and 4, has published the second part of the article on the '*Soras*' by Mr. Sitapati. In this article some Religious, ceremonial rites and festivals of the '*Soras*' are given in some detail. The writer has given a comparative study of aborigines of the Central belt of India and has shown that the Oraons, Birhors, Mundas, Santhals and Soras have some common deities. The learned investigator has used the much debated old term '*Kol-Munda*' to the aborigines of this part. It would have been better if he used some other term, viz., '*Oraon-Munda*' or '*Pre-Dravidian*' for the Central belt aborigines as now the educated aborigines take ill if they are called '*Kols*,' which is a loose term and often used in contempt for the uncultured.

*The Science and Culture* in its issue, Vol. VIII, Nos. 5 to 7, has published an article entitled '*Indian Physical Anthropology and Raciology*' by Mr. Achinta Kumar Mitra. The article is not merely an appreciation of the late Ramaprasad Chanda's *Racial Theory of India* but really it is an epitome of all investigations and writings on Indian Raciology based on facts and figures, including recent findings. The article is free from any theorisation; as such it will be of great help to the student of Anthropology preparing for University examinations.

RAMESH CHANDRA ROY

## REVIEWS

N. KOPPERS, *Bhagwan, the Supreme Deity of the Bhils*, ANTHROPOS (Freiburg, Switzerland, Vol. xxxv-v. 1940-41), 62 pp.

THE above monograph is only a part of the study inaugurated by the Anthropos Institute at Freiburg, Switzerland, in 1938-39 through Dr. Koppers, a highly qualified member of the staff. This esteemed scholar had his headquarters at Rambhapur in the State of Jhabna in Central India and enjoyed the benefit of the collaboration of missionaries like L. Jungbhum, the author of a short Bhili grammar published at Mhow in 1938, and of Stephen Fuchs, S.V.D. This expedition was well-equipped and well-financed, mainly by the Rockefeller Institute, and managed to collect valuable records of anthropological measurements, blood group tests, phonograph records of Bhil songs, photographs, films, etc. Dr. Koppers has visited from his headquarters other centres of Bhil tribes at Barwani, Nandarbar, and Udaipur-Kherwara; but he does not seem to have visited any of the Bhils in Gujarat proper. Yet the monograph is of great importance to the students of Bhili culture. The numerous extracts from Bhili sayings and songs abundantly prove the essentially Gujarati nature of the dialect of Bhils living so far away from Gujarat proper. As already mentioned by the present writer, it is a phenomenon of singular importance that the language of the type of Bhili or Bhilodi which is spoken in areas as far apart as Lahore, Central India and West Bengal should be so intimately connected with modern Gujarati, which is spoken only in a limited area. Dr. Koppers is silent on this point, but as further research proceeds his views are bound to be crystallised on this subject as well. One remark must however be made that either the transcription of the Gujarati script or the proof reading leaves much to be desired, as simple mistakes spoil the meaning as well as the conclusions therefrom, e.g., '*Bhanohe*' (p. 272) should be '*Bharohe*' to mean trust; '*lege*' should be '*le-je*' to mean take; and '*alarge*' should be '*alje*' to mean give (p. 273).

Dr. Koppers' study bids fair to have important results as his field is wide, his vision is keen and his aim is comprehensive. He seeks to find solution to the origin of the culture of the Bhils as well as the origin of not only Indian religions like Hinduism but also other Indo-European religions. He has spared no available material nor omitted to mention any well-known authority likely to be useful in solving the problem. He seems to think that all races and peoples possess in a varying degree a belief in the supreme spirit, in addition to the ordinary godlings worshipped even by primitive tribes, and that the Bhils' conception of Bhagwan is remarkable both inasmuch as it is different from that of the Hindus and because 'no material image of Bhagwan is known to the Bhils.' He considers that Bhagwan represents the highest type of God known to the Bhils and is described by a variety of epithets—Paramesar (Great God), Nabhav-wa-walo (Supporter), Kharo Dhani (True Master), Uper Walo (One Who dwells on high), Bap (Father) or Bapji (respected father), An-data (Giver of Food), Moto Dharmi (The Great Pious One), Bhalo Dharmi Rajo (Good and Religious King), etc. These epithets, which appear to Dr. Koppers to convey special significance are easily understood by anyone familiar with Bhili language which is a dialect of Gujarati. They are all derived from Sanskrit and form the direct inheritance of the contacts with Hinduism for centuries. Hinduism is a very difficult religion for anyone to understand within the few years which Dr. Koppers has spent in India, and much more so is the religion of the Bhils. It is a well-known fact that out of nearly 40 lakhs of persons who speak the Bhili, Bhilodi or the allied languages, as many as 85 or 90 per cent are more or less converted into Hinduism, some are either converted into other faiths like Islam or Christianity, and the persons who still represent the pure culture of the indigenous aboriginal Bhils are so few in number

and situated in so remote places that it becomes difficult to establish contact unless the admirable records by Mr. Elwin in Bastar State are followed closely. The Koppers, p. 325, is remarkable that "though the religion of the Mundas show lunar rather than solar affinities, the Bhagwan of the Bhils is free from both lunar and solar hereditary traits, and to as in other respects a 'sui generis' High-God."

Dr. Koppers does not mention the village gods and godlings worshipped by the Bhils, the prevalent belief in witch-craft and dakans among the Bhils, nor the frequent sacrifices of the fowl and goat to the presiding deities of the dead, but has come to the conclusion, p. 303, that 'it is no overstatement to designate the Bhils as "definite and conscious monotheists." Although no one religious tendencies of the Bhils in Gujarat proper would be prepared to support the above conclusion, the present thesis is a valuable addition to the literature on the subject.

P. G. SHAH.

A. N. MITCHELL, *A Grammar of Maria Gondi*, (Jagdalpur, Printed at the Bastar State Press, 1942).

MR. A. N. MITCHELL has increased his outstanding services to the aboriginals of India by this remarkable study of that dialect of Gondi which is spoken by the Bison-Horn Marias of Bastar State. Our knowledge of Gondi, which is still spoken by over a million and a half people and is probably known to some extent to a great many more, has hitherto been based on a rather inaccurate account in the *Linguistic Survey of India*, on Trench's *Grammar of the Gondi* spoken in the Betul District, on *A Manual of Maria* by the missionary Lind and on the original Gondi version of the Lingo legend recorded eighty years ago by the Rev. Stephen Hislop. Mr. Mitchell, starting from the particular dialect used by the Bison-Horn Marias, goes on, very rightly, to put these earlier authorities in their place, and while he himself would be the last to claim that he has achieved finality on so difficult and obscure a subject, his *Grammar* throws a flood of light not only on the actual structure of the language but on its relations with its neighbours.

The book consists of a Foreword by W. V. Grigson, a most valuable and readable introduction by the author, a *Grammar* on the traditional lines and an extensive vocabulary. It is a great pity that the printing of the book was not entrusted to one of the larger presses, for it abounds in misprints, one of the most serious being that the very word Maria is spelt in four different ways—Maria, Madia, Mādīā and Māḍīā. The vocabularies are not always in strict alphabetical order. In Appendix II the words are numbered, in Appendix III they are not. In Appendix IV certain words have a star against them, but we are not told why. An excellent innovation, however, is Mr. Mitchell's practice of writing the Gondi words in Devanagiri script. Although Gondi is not a written language, since this script is phonetic it is by far the more satisfactory manner of recording words which otherwise would have to be printed with the clumsy apparatus of diacritical marks.

But the printing is a matter that can easily be remedied in the new edition which I greatly hope will be possible before long, and which is necessary in order that this important addition to Indian linguistic studies can reach a wider public. Mr. Mitchell is to be most warmly congratulated on his energy and enterprise, the precision of his scholarship, the wide range of his interests and above all his devotion to the aboriginal cause which has made him exert himself so valiantly in a field which does not offer the customary rewards of labour.

V. E.

B. K. SARKAR, *The Political Philosophies Since 1905*, Vol. II, Parts II & III: *The Epoch of Neo-Democracy and Neo-Socialism* (Lahore, 1942).

THIS work mainly deals with sociological matters and as usual it bears testimony to the learning and research of the author. It is rich in materials and bibliography, and it will be of great help to those interested in sociological studies as a guide for reference.

Dr. Sarkar criticizes some old anthropological views. Thus he points out that actual examination has shown that dolichocephaly or blondness is not necessarily correlated with energy, talent and other superior mental qualities. He challenges the so-called Nordic superiority theory and shows what its shortcomings are. The term 'Aryan' is flagrantly misused as equivalent to non-Jewish. The so-called primitive Aryan culture was derived from Babylon and was in fact due to Semitic influences. It is fallacious to attribute cultural achievements and inherent mental aptitudes to different races. There cannot be any rigidity of race types because 'both morphological and physiological characters change with change of environment.' Extensive investigation has shown that the same race shows great differences in different environments, while, on the other, different races react alike in the same environment. The author prophesies that the Bengali race has a great future though its medieval period is at best a chronicle of mediocre achievements. Ethnocentrism has no place at the present day. Races that did not achieve anything in the past have come to the lime-light recently by their progress, e.g., Japan.

In dealing with the population problem of the world Dr. Sarkar shows how Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy are trying not only to increase their population but also to improve the stock. In this connection he refutes the theory held by some writers that India is over-populated. We also think that India can still feed many mouths more but what is wanted is that the standard of living should be raised and that the productivity of land and labour should be increased.

In the chapter on Ramkrishna Vivekananda the essence of Ramkrishna's teaching is brought out. His view of religion is most catholic and most democratic. According to him every faith is a path to God. Vivekananda his worthy disciple, brought this message of India to the West.

H. D. GHOSH

K. M. MUNSHI, *The Early Aryans in Gujarat* (University of Bombay, 1941).

MR. MUNSHI is better known as the Ex-Home Minister of the Government of Bombay or the founder of the political group "Akhand Hindustan" than as an oriental scholar or as a writer. He is a very accomplished writer in Gujarati. In this book for which the author claims seventeen years of research, he tries to prove that 'Mahabharata' the famous Sanskrit epic, does not portray Indian history in proper perspective. He favours the conclusion that the Mahabharata is a a Bhrgu epic, and that the Kuru-Panchala war was a minor conflict which was lengthened out into a great imaginary epic story. The author thinks that the most important and authentic incident of ancient Indian history was a great war between the Aryan tribes which lasted for several generations. An important episode of this war was the *Dasa-rajna*; Sudas and Vasistha with Bhishma, Vitahavyas, and Srnjayas (Halhayas) were on one side, while Puruskusta, Visvamiitra and Jamadagna led the Bharatas, Bhrgus, and their allies. Even though the five lectures leave the reader unconvinced as to the unreliability of the Mahabharata epic, Mr. Munshi's style and method of approach are thought-provoking and demand attention.



The other important thesis of Mr. Munshi is that the outer band of Aryans—the Saryatas, the Bhrgus, and the Haihayas were in occupation of Gujarata from the dawn of traditional history. The Haihayas defeated the Nagas and founded Mahishmati on the Narmada near modern Broach. The Bhrgus under Rama spread their conquest to the Narmada, destroyed Mahishmati and laid the foundations of Surparaka. The Saryatas had a king Sarayati, whose son Anarta gave his name Anarta to the country known at present as Central Gujarat; his daughter Sukanya was married to the sage Chyavana who had his hermitage on the Narmada. It is possible to accept this evidence as well as the statement at p. 28 that these tribes 'were all nomadic,' but it is hard to believe they were here from the earliest time recorded in tradition. Mr. Munshi seems to have committed himself to the view (p. 102) that the Aryans did not come from outside but were indigenous to the Indian soil. In the October 1939 issue of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, the reviewer has, in his article on "The original inhabitants of Gujarat," mentioned the ancient tribes, Dasyus, Nishadas, Kiratas, Pulindas, Chandalas, Sabaras and Bhils as frequently coming into conflict with the incoming Aryans.

In spite of disagreement with the views propounded in the book, one cannot but admire the naive simplicity with which Mr. Munshi avers that 'I would not be sorry if further examinations reveal that I am mistaken,' and we need not stint praise at the get up of the book, and the presentation of his case. The well documented footnotes, which occupy almost half the book, and the general index, as well as the Sanskrit index, remove a deficiency which is commonly noticed in books published in this country.

P. G. SHAH

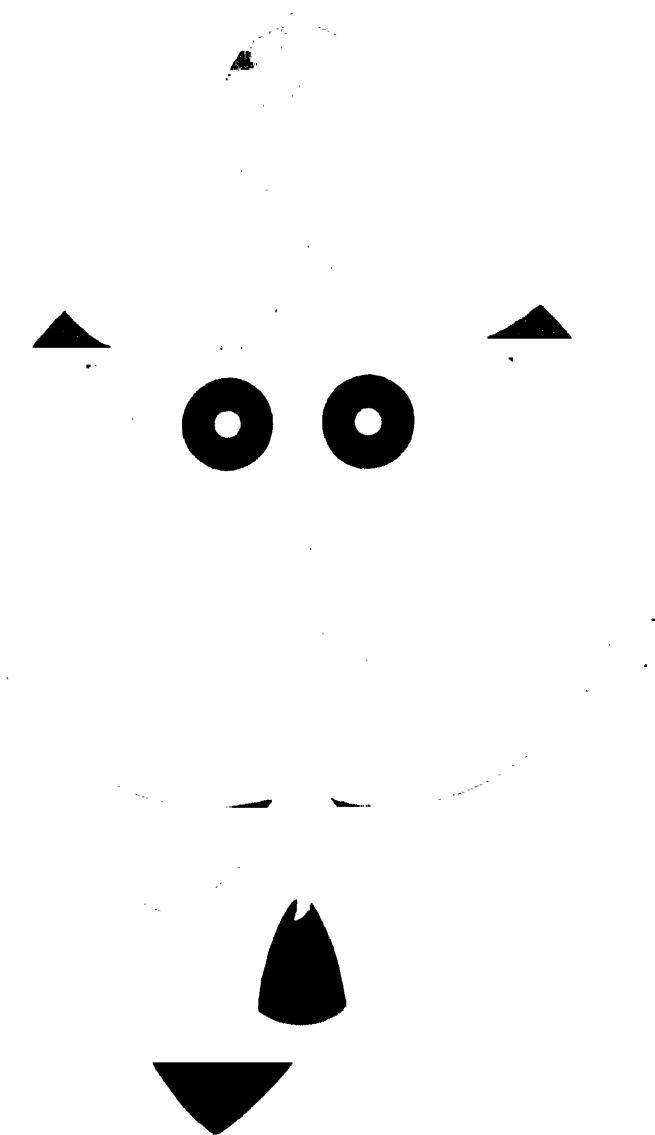
#### NOTE

The picture at the beginning of this number is of a Bison-Horn Maria girl from Mokhpal in Bastar State.

The editors wish to express their most grateful thanks to Mrs. Maeve Wood and to Mr. R. E. Hawkins for their help in preparing *Man in India* in its new form.

Mr. S. S. Sarkar has pointed out a misprint at page 212 of *Man in India*, Vol. XXII. In Table One of the article "Suicide among the Aborigines of Bastar State" the total 'Hindu' population of Bastar in 1931 is shown as 149,00. The correct number should be 149,000. It may be mentioned here, what was not clear in this Table, that the total 'Aboriginal' population which was given as 379,082 did not represent the total of the figures printed above it. In this Table only the important tribes were listed, and the total aboriginal figure includes several that were not given there.





JUANG GIRL

CARVING FROM MUNDAGARH DORMITORY AT BALI,  
KEONJHAR STATE

# MAN IN INDIA

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[ No. 2

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## COMMENT

‘FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS,’ said Hirschfeld, ‘human folly has overwhelmed love with debris, pelted love with filth. To liberate love from this is to restore that vital human value which among all human values stands supreme.’ In that task of liberation anthropology has played a conspicuous and noble part. In showing how all human institutions, domestic, magical or juridical, have developed in orderly process towards a scientific attitude to life, it has destroyed a hundred false notions; it has at once dignified and humbled modern man; it has helped to put sex and marriage in their proper place.

‘To be happy at home,’ said Samuel Johnson, ‘is the end of all ambition.’ For this domestic happiness mankind generally has found the institution of marriage necessary. Yet the majority of men and women are still woefully ignorant of the technique of marriage. Indeed in this there are not a few civilized people who could learn much from aborigines, who take marriage very seriously, some of them training their children carefully so that they can make the best of it. A Muria marriage song runs:

It is a cart, if you know how to drive, boy.

It is a food, if you know how to eat, boy.

It is a path, if you know how to walk, boy.

It is a horse, if you know how to ride, boy.

It is as necessary to be educated, ‘to know how,’ in marriage as in any other business.

The researches of scholars have made it impossible for us to talk any longer, in the patronizing fashion characteristic of Victorian England and certain parts of modern India, about the sex life of savages—that they mate like animals, existing on a dull bovine

level in the intervals of debasing orgies, ignorant of all the arts of love. Yet we are still far, particularly in India, from knowing the realities of aboriginal marriage and sex. Polygamy exists, but we have little knowledge of its real prevalence and no knowledge at all of the psychological stresses of a polygamous household. The books tell us of joking relationships and rules of avoidance. But of these things, which could so easily be studied by Indian scholars with their unique opportunities of entering into the families and homes of the people, we have little vivid and concrete information. It is the same with the institution of the serving-marriage and the cross-cousin marriage. Are such marriages successful? Is it good to marry someone you have known from childhood? What is the effect of future husband and wife living together in the same house for years before marriage? Our information on this and allied subjects is for the most part dry and lifeless. We know the facts about the institutions. We have our Tables of Relationship. We have recorded our genealogies. This framework was necessary. But it is now time for the framework to be filled in.

When we turn to the subject of sex, although we have a remarkable science of erotics coming down to us from ancient India, scholars in this country seem to have been very shy of investigating it among modern aboriginals. It is hard to understand why this should be so. Such timidity does not exist elsewhere. It did exist at one time to the disadvantage both of science and morals. But the extent to which the times have changed can be seen from the following two quotations. The first is from the pen of the Rev. Edwin Smith, one of the greatest of African missionaries, for many years Literary Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. In his book on the Ba-ila he writes on the subject of the relations of the sexes. 'There is much that is unpleasant in this part of our subject—much that we

would fain pass over in silence. But if we are to be faithful to our purpose to give a true picture of the Ba-ila, we must not dwell upon what R. L. Stevenson called "the prim, obliterated, polite surface of life," but must lay bare "the broad, bawdy and orgiastic—or maenadic—foundations." To write of the Ba-ila and omit all reference to sex would be like writing of the sky and leaving out the sun; for sex is the most pervasive element of their life. It is the atmosphere into which the children are brought. Their early years are largely a preparation for the sexual function; during the years of maturity it is their most ardent pursuit, and old age is spent in vain and disappointing endeavours to continue it. Sex overtowers all else . . . We desire to look at even these things from their point of view. Our object is not to hold them up to reprobation, but simply to describe and understand.'

No man has done more to establish the historic and moral basis of marriage than Westermarck. To him the subject of sex was good and pure. But one thing roused his indignation, and that was when people were prudish about it. 'The concealment of truth', he said, 'is the only indecorum known to science; and to keep anything secret within its cold and passionless expanses would be as prudish as to throw a cloth round a naked statue.'

These two judgments, which are typical of the outlook of modern educated men, should be sufficient to remove the inhibitions of our research students.

In the task of illuminating the realities of sex and marriage Indian scholarship, because of its unparalleled opportunities, may well take the lead. But that will demand fieldwork on a scale that has not been attempted hitherto, arduous and exacting, systematic in method, expensive of time and energy.

# SANTAL POETRY

## (I) *Marriage Songs*

### I

You petted me like a pet parrot  
You petted me like a tame pigeon  
Father, oh when did you give your word ?  
From my friend's love you parted me.

### II

My mother on the stool  
My father on the chair  
Oh they sit at ease  
You are tired of rearing me, milk tree  
So stay as you are.

### III

Seeing a tall tree  
And its thick leaves  
The little bees have settled  
Seeing a big house  
And a high roof  
The strangers chose it  
From birth on to birth  
They are our kinsmen.

### IV

With such a big pond, O lotus  
Why have you come where the water flows away  
Come to the spider's country, O my lotus  
And the rain is drizzling down.

### V

In whose court-yard has the spring come out ?  
Whose is the rice that has floated away ?  
In Rama's court-yard the spring broke  
And the rice drifted down.

### VI

O two white doves of the white mountain  
What was your sorrow that you flew away ?  
It was the heat of the day  
It was the dew in the night  
It was the dew that made you fly away.

## VII

At the end of the street  
The sound of violin and flute  
To the spring I had gone for drawing water  
Hearing and hearing,  
Listening, listening at the spring  
O friend, I left behind my pot of water.

## VIII

In what a lovely way you flaunted  
O you true one, how I loved and fondled you  
My heart is a glass and I look at you in it  
But how dimly I see you now.

## IX

The tank, the tank  
Who dug it like a sea?  
The chain of gold  
The ring of silver  
Who linked them to the sky?

The tank, the tank  
The father dug it like a sea  
The chain of gold  
The ring of silver  
The mother linked them to the sky.

## X

On the big mountain, the fat rabbit  
On the small hill, the peacock with its tail  
Scamper away, O you fat rabbit  
Fly away, O peacock with your tail.

## XI

In the upper land the clouds have gathered  
And the storm is coming up  
O dark girl, we will take the leaf of a palm tree  
And stop the wind and rain.

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(II) *Bir Seren*

## XII

On the banks of the river  
The bushes are in fruit  
The horned owl  
And the bearded king-fisher  
Have finished their eating.



## XIII

As I could eat the fruit, the mango  
How I want you, my love  
The juice drips on the tip of a bunch of plantains  
And I am filled with it, my love.

## XIV

O my love  
Play your flute on the mountain  
I will hear you at the spring  
If I leave my pot, the men will see me  
If I stay away, my love will scold me.

## XV

They are crackling the raheer bushes  
Where you went to have me  
O Mirza boy, let me go  
My bangles and anklets are tinkling  
And all the traders will hear us.

## XVI

Two boys  
Ploughing, ploughing  
Ploughing on the hillside.

Two girls  
Drawing water  
Water on the lower hill.

Did you see my father  
O you two boys  
Ploughing on the hillside?

Did you see my mother  
O you two girls  
Drawing water on the hill?

We saw your father  
High up on the mountain  
We saw your mother  
Far away below.

## XVII

O you two boys  
Ploughing the sandy road  
What is your sept?

O you two girls  
Taking water from the pool in the sand  
What sept is yours?

O you two girls  
Our sept is a hesel stick  
And a plough's handle  
What sept is yours ?

O you two boys  
Our sept is a cold pitcher of water  
And a pad with a hole.

## XVIII

Cutting grass on the big mountain  
O my love, I am thirsty for water  
O my love, take me  
To the spring by the tamarind.

In the spring by the tamarind  
Are many leeches  
O my love, take me  
To the spring by the mango.

In the spring by the mango, O my love  
There are many cowherd boys  
Let us go to Maenamati  
And strain some water from the pool.

## XIX

Cutting thatch at the foot of the mountain  
O my love, I am thirsty for water  
Take me to the spring by the mango  
In the spring by the mango  
Are many maggots  
Take me to the spring with the tamarind  
In the hillocks, the stones and boulders  
Is a bonga who feeds on men  
Oh take me to the nalla with the thatching grass.

## XX

Yesterday we said  
We will go out when the moon is up  
The moon had gone half way  
But O my love, I could not see you  
It was the love of the milk tree  
O my love  
It was the love of the flowering tree  
But still I was to come  
When the moon had gone half way.

## XXI

On the mountain a crab  
Rustles in the leaves  
On the hill a crab  
Slowly drags along  
If I had seen my friend  
I would have killed myself with running  
I would have died from striking my brow  
If I had seen my girl  
How the lily would have burst into bud.

## XXII

O my love  
The dust rises on the land  
The sky is hot and red  
Take me to another land  
With shoes for the hot earth  
And for the sky an umbrella  
Take me to another land  
On a bullock with a long and tufted tail  
O my love  
Load up some rice  
Take me to another land.

## XXIII

Sister, we are tending cows  
Tending them with boys  
And what may they not say ?  
Sister, you are fully grown  
But I am still quite raw  
And what may they not say ?  
Do not get scared sister  
If they speak a word to us  
I it is who will answer.

## XXIV

O my love  
Like a mango is your body  
And like marrows your long breasts  
All the body at my waist  
O my love I will give you  
And you may do with it as you will  
' But my breasts and my bosom  
I will not let you have.'

## XXV

O my friend  
Find for us where the girls sleep  
O my friend  
I will search and look  
The door is made of cotton wood  
The bar is of *baru*  
O my friend, how will you break in ?

## XXVI

Below the *bari* by the stony spring  
We sat together  
O uncle, I shall call you uncle  
But do not call me daughter  
The waters of two rivers  
Are flowing into one.

## XXVII

O my love, come down to my village  
And let us stand and talk  
If you want to drink milk, I will give you milk  
If you want to eat curds, I will give them to you  
But only with a pigeon's soup will you be happy.

## XXVIII

The shade of a tree shifts round  
And a bundle of leaves withers  
Oh let me go, you blind boy  
Your mother I call aunt  
Your father I call uncle  
Oh let me go, you blind one.

## XXIX

O girl, I will cure you  
But what if you have me ?  
I will have you and have you  
But I will make you well  
With a black fowl  
I will keep the bonga happy  
With my left hand  
I will splash your water.

## XXX

In the morning you are drawing water, sister  
But what is that blood upon your skirt ?  
Brother you know the way a girl is born  
A green kingfisher I caught up in my lime.

## XXXI

O sister, that young boy  
He did not leave me  
Even in his wedding litter  
He was making eyes at me.

## XXXII

In our court-yard is a white blossom  
In my lover's courtyard is an *akar* plant.  
How shall I get to his court-yard?  
I will pretend I went for flowers  
But I will see my lover.

## XXXIII

You in the upper village  
I in the lower  
O my love  
My heart is tied to you.  
  
Your father and brothers  
Are standing with axes and arrows  
But, my love  
You do not make my heart sad.  
  
With thick creepers  
The tree is hidden  
You have glued me to you  
Like a bird trapped in lime.

## XXXIV

You in the upper village  
I in the lower  
O my sweet love, what dried-up stream shall we meet in?  
Over there is the nalla with the plantain  
And there are the *garni* bushes  
In the nalla with the plantain  
I will meet and wrestle with you.

## XXXV

O second girl  
Your body is fit for tying  
Your nipples have grown black  
Oh for whom are you?  
That grown boy, mother  
Who stands all sleek and round  
It is he who will have me.

## XXXVI

O my love, your body is fullgrown  
And I am still too young  
You will damage my young body  
O my love, do not catch at me  
O my love, do not force me  
If you force me, I shall weep  
With your young body, O my love  
You may cry and mourn  
But I've seen your breasts  
Poking from your dress  
And I've caught them in my hands.

## XXXVII

O my mother's brother  
Through the forests we went together  
A thorn stuck in my left foot  
O mother's brother  
Take my thorn out.  
  
O my girl  
Where has the thorn stuck  
What has happened to you?  
O mother's brother  
Take out the thorn from between my thighs.

## XXXVIII

In the upper village  
A bar tree formed her garland  
In the lower village  
A pipal made her necklace  
Alas, my love, that when your form was swelling  
You went and left me.

(Bir Seren or jungle songs are sung by Santals at their annual *sendras* or hunting councils and on occasions of *bitlaha* or social outcasting. They are also sung by boys and girls when in the jungle or on their own and are often ways of starting a romance. 'Old men think them a joke but to boys and girls they are beauty.')

W. G. ARCHER

# AN ANTHOLOGY OF MARRIAGE SERMONS

*The formal speeches delivered during the marriage ceremonies of many tribes are often beautiful and interesting in themselves, and important as revealing the social and moral teaching that the tribesmen emphasise at this critical time. Unhappily few of these have been recorded: this short Anthology indicates the possibilities in a fruitful field of research.*

## SANTAL

A: Members of the bridegroom's party, before you leave for home I shall say a few words. In the hunt and the chase, in pain and in pleasure, with promise and no force, on the right side and on the left, with good omens, the one who wears a chain, the one who wears a nose ring, we have linked and tied together. Sitting with Sing Bonga, Marang Buru, and the five great ancestors we have joined the chain and the ring. The bridegroom has secured the family of the bride, the bride has received the house of the bridegroom, the houses are now one. Whenever you went on a hunt or a chase, whenever you went to a market, whenever you went through village or field, you drank the water from the spring or the pool without our knowing. But now you have bought our house, from to-day you must never leave it either to the right or the left. Come into its shade for a pot of water and the shed of the cows.

From twelve kilns you chose a single pot. You bought it after tapping and sounding it. If it should prove lazy, if it should start straying, if it should go blind, if it should get crippled, if it should go down into the ground, it will not be on us. If it should change its form to pewter or to copper, if it should become a loose girl, or a whore, if it should poison persons or become a witch, it will be through you that it has done it, for it is a man's house that moulds men as a cowshed moulds cattle.

Now we have eaten the dowry money, and the gifts to the bride's brother, the grandmother and mother. Bone of her bones and ash of her ashes, we have sold. But the blood of her head and the blood of her ears, we have not sold, and should she die, we shall follow you for her. And if on any day or half a day, she should burn the rice or spoil the curry, do not get angry with her. If you tell her what to do, if you instruct her and still she does not do it, O headman, send a man to us. If no man is free, send a crooked stick. If you have no stick, send a dog to us and we shall meet and talk.

B: Manjhi, it is indeed true that what has been done has not been done by us. Sitting with Sing Bonga, Marang Buru, and the five great ancestors, tying them to the right and to the left, and with good omens, we joined the ring and the chain.

From twelve kilns we chose one pot and after tapping and sounding it, we bought it. We have carried away your pet parrot from the perch it had with you to its perch with us. If it should turn to pewter or copper, it will still be on us. If it should be lazy, if it should stray, or if it should go down into the ground, it will be our doing. If it should lose its skin, if it should turn into a loose girl or a whore, if it should poison people or become a witch, if it should start stealing and thieving, the fault will be ours. Bone of her bones and ash of her ashes, from today we have bought. But the blood of the head and the blood of the ears, these we have not bought, and should she die, you may follow us for her. And if on one day or half a day she should burn the rice or spoil the curry, shall we not instruct and teach her? And should she still not learn, we shall send you word and meet.

And if you ever come our way, never pass us either on the left or right. And if you go to a hunt or a chase, a field or a village, or a men's assembly, never pass us to the left or right. Formerly you drank water from the spring unknown to us, but from today our families are one. Come in and drink water from a gourd in the shade of the creeper's pole. The houses of this village are ours and those of our village are yours.

*These farewell addresses are usually spoken by the two jogmanjhis or village proctors but sometimes by the two manjhis or headmen just before the boy's party leaves for the boy's village with the bride. The addresses follow a rigid verbal form which varies little throughout the Damin. The addresses were recorded at Simlong, Santal Parganas in 1941.*

W. G. ARCHER

#### URAON

I shall speak in riddles. In an ebony bush it looks to the sky. God is above and the elders are below. Attend, boy and girl.

Imagine you are out for hunting, boy, and you kill a deer. You will bring it home, and the girl will cook it. When she has cooked it, she will cut it up. But mark. For all others she must serve the flesh on a tiny tamarind leaf; but for herself she must take it from a large *korkot* leaf.

Attend again. When the bull is killed for meat, girl, you must insist on having the flesh, on having only flesh - nothing else. The boy will have the bones, nothing more than bones.

Then again. When on a hunting expedition, he slips in a ditch, laming his leg and losing the use of his fingers, never say, never say he has become a wreck.

And listen, boy. If your girl, going to pick leaves from the *koenar* tree, falls from a branch and breaks an arm or a leg, you



must never say she has become useless. Never tell her she has lost the use of her hands.

As the fig tree gives many fruits, so you will have your children. Rise and salute the elders.

W. G. ARCHER

#### GOND OF MANDLA

*The bride's father addresses the young husband :*

Look, boy, this girl is young and foolish. She is lazy and idle. She does not know how to weed the fields. She does not know how to clean or cook the grain, or grind the wheat. She is ignorant of the work of the rice-husker. Till now in her mother's house she has played, and when she was weary of her games, she took her food. She is a poor man's daughter. Teach her carefully, patiently, patiently. If she forgets her duty say to yourself, 'After all she is my wife.' Even if she forgets seven times, forgive her. Do not abuse the girl. Do not order her about, sending her everywhere at once. See that everyday she eats her food and does not go hungry through temper. As you give salt to a young cow and soon it comes running to your hand, so create love in your young wife. Live well, feed her well, love her well. From one, God will bring twenty-one.

#### PARDHAN OF MANDLA

*Bride's father speaks to the bridegroom's father :*

This is not my child: she is yours. She is the child of a poor man, but she has never worked hard in the house. You know our character and habits, and that is why you ever came to our home. Tomorrow do not say to my daughter, 'You are the child of a naked man, the daughter of a thief.' Teach her yourselves to cook. She may make mistakes; she may ruin the food. But remember she is yours. Teach her well. We have given her birth, but it is not we who have allotted her fate.

*And the bridegroom's father answers :*

We are all of the same stock. Our home is like your home. We are not Rajas here either. If we trouble your girl, we will ruin ourselves. Do not be afraid. She herself will see what to do, and will play her part.

*Then the bride's own father addresses her :*

Daughter, you have made a new home. These are your parents. Listen to them. Give them water for bathing and serve them with hot food. Ever be in tune with them. Do not give alms without consulting them. Do not go out visiting from house to house. Do not be ha-ha hi-hi. Play with your husband,

if you must play, but not with others. Do not listen to the advice of other people. Remember the world is always ready to ruin a man. But do not be frightened. We will always be here; we will come to you in trouble. But do not come to us by yourself. Always bring your husband with you.

*And the bridegroom's father replies :*

Indeed when the girl comes home to her mother's house, do not keep her too long on account of your love for her. If your love holds her too long, she may run away to another man. If in a temper she runs away to you, send her back soon. Do not encourage her.

#### BHUIYA OF BONAI

*When the bridegroom's father gives the ring to the bride, her father says to him :*

O bandhu, this is my daughter and I give her to you. Now you have a daughter-in-law. Consider well. If she is crooked-eyed, she is yours. If she is lame, she is yours. If she is hunch-backed, she is yours. If she is a witch or mad, she is yours. If she is dirty, deaf or dumb, she is yours. If she is licentious, she is yours.

*And the boy's father says :*

Whatever she may be, she will be ours.

#### JUANG OF PAL LAHARA

*When the bride and bridegroom are brought into their new home, the people say to them :*

Look children, live well together. Be not guided by bad friends. Depend on your own joint labour for your living. Girl, follow your husband to the jungle. Help him in digging up roots.

*When the boys of the village dormitory take the bridegroom to sleep for the first time with his bride, they say :*

See, here is your new home. You used to sleep with us, the companions of your youth, but now you have left us. Look well to your home. Care for your mother and father.

*And the girl's younger brother, or someone in a joking relationship to her, says :*

Look boy! Here is a new girl. Whether her breasts are small as lemons or whether like mangoes they are large and firm, hold them well. Enjoy her throughout the night. But do not relieve yourself inside the house.

## KURUK OF BASTAR

*When the bride is taken to live with her husband, the village priest says to them both :*

Work hard and live happily together. Remain in friendship with your neighbours, and do not quarrel with them. Give water to the traveller. May Mahapurub give you many children.

*And when the people first make them sleep together, they say :*

Look! From to-day this is your house and door. Live happily together, and do not quarrel. Boy, if your girl weeps, comfort her. Girl, if your boy needs help, assist him. Give food and water to the traveller. Worship the ancestors and gods. May there be many children in your house.

## DHURWA OF BASTAR

*The elders address the bridegroom :*

Look! Now this house is yours. Look after its affairs, its management, its fields, its dues to Government. You are the head of the house. Here is your brother, your sister, your father. Do what they tell you. Do not quarrel. Do not steal. Do not make a bad name for yourself or us. Do not deceive anyone. Control your life. Look neither at man nor woman. Do not make love to any other woman. At festivals salute the Maharaja.

VERRIER ELWIN

## MARIA OF BASTAR

*The girl's father addresses the bridegroom's elder brother :*

Have you come willingly for this flower? Will you wear it and cherish it? It is fresh and tender, and will not bear rough handling. Know you how witless women are? If she be a poor housekeeper, pardon her. If she cook badly, pardon her. If she speak to other men, do not take it amiss but pardon her.

W. V. GRIGSON

## CHAKMA OF CHITTAGONG

*The bride's father addresses the bridegroom :*

Take her. I have given her to you ; but she is not acquainted with her household duties. If therefore at any time you come back from the jhum and find the rice burnt, or anything else wrong, teach her: but do not beat her. But at the end of three years, if she still continues ignorant, then beat her, but do not take her life; for if you do, I shall demand the price of blood at your hands, but for beating her I shall not hold you responsible or interfere.

T. H. LEWIN

# MAHER

By MARY FULLER

In the first month my mother-in-law did say,  
Girl, what are your longings ?  
If you would, O *Sasu*, fulfill my longings  
Please to bring clusters from the sandalwood grove.

*Zo-re-zo.*

In the second month my father-in-law did say,  
*Sun*, what are your longings ?  
If you would, O *Sasara*, fulfill my longings  
Please to bring dried fruits from the sandalwood grove.

*Zo-re-zo.*

In the third month my brother-in-law did say,  
*Vahini*, what are your longings ?  
If you would, O *Dira*, fulfill my longings  
Please to bring a diamond from the sandalwood grove.

*Zo-re-zo.*

In the fourth month my sister-in-law did say,  
*Vahini*, what are your longings ?  
If you would, O *Nanand*, fulfill my longings  
Please to bring me Govind from the sandalwood grove.

*Zo-re-zo.*

In the fifth month my brother-in-law's wife did say,  
*Bai*, what are your longings ?  
If you would, O *Zau*, fulfill my longings  
Please to fill baskets with sweet cakes and sugar puffs.

*Zo-re-zo.*

In the sixth month my brother did say,  
*Akka*, what, dear, are your longings ?  
If you would, O Brother, fulfill my longings  
Please to bring me fruits from the sandalwood grove.

*Zo-re-zo.*

In the seventh month my sister did say,  
*Akka*, what dear, are your longings ?  
If you would, O Sister, fulfill my longings  
Please to comb my head and plait my hair.

*Zo-re-zo.*

In the eighth month my father did say,  
 Daughter, what, dear, are your longings ?  
 If you would, O Father, fulfill my longings  
 Please now to bespeak a necklace and bracelets.

*Zo-re-zo.*

In the ninth month my mother did say,  
 Daughter, what, are your longings ?  
 If you would, O Mother, fulfill my longings  
 Smear the room with cowdung, and be ready beside me.

*Zo-re-zo.*

In the Maharashtra girls' and women's songs abound in allusions to relationships. Nearly every relationship has its own particular name, its own associations, its own traditional etiquette. Generally speaking, all relations on the father's side must be treated with more respect than those on the mother's. A *mavshi* (mother's sister) is like a second mother and is often called mother ; but a *mavlan* (father's sister) may be a rather awesome person, especially if she is older than one's mother and inclined to lady it over her, and in any case must be treated with some formality. But to a little girl the most awesome persons in the world are those of her husband's family, especially her parents-in-law, her *sasu* and *sasara* ; and before she is sent to *sasar* (father-in-law's house) she is well instructed in the titles of all there and the degree of respect due to each. There is a humorous saying among high-caste women that at *sasar* one must say *hada* even to the dog. *Had* is the common interjection used to drive a dog out of the way or out of the house, and to talk of giving it the respectful plural ending of an imperative verb is only a bit of fun ; but, no doubt, many a little girl newly arrived at *sasar* and anxious not to fail in any point of etiquette may so have to address the family watchdog.

In this song the singer is evidently the eldest child at *maher* (mother's house), her old home, for her brother and sister call her *akka*, a term of address for an elder sister. At *sasar* too she is married to the elder son, for her husband's brother (*dir*), and his sister (*nanand*) call her *vahini*, the polite style of address for an elder brother's wife ; and her *dir*'s wife calls her *bai*, a respectful compellation with many uses.

Where English must use the round about *in-law*, or descriptive adjectives like *paternal* and *maternal*, and the phrase *by marriage*, Marathi has for each relationship one simple specific term. For example, in English the single term *sister-in-law* applies to four relationships, two for a woman and two for a man ; but in Indian usage, built up as it is on the joint family system, which necessitates

exact discrimination in a large and much ramified family all living together, there are six kinds of sisters-in-law, each with her own appellation. In Marathi a woman's brother's wife is her *bhauzai*, her husband's sister her *nanand*, her husband's brother's wife her *zau*; a man's brother's wife is his *bhauzai*, his wife's sister his *mehuni*, and, oddly enough, his wife's brother's wife his *bahin*, which means no more than *sister*. There, at least, invention failed! Of course there are six corresponding kinds of brothers-in-law, as variously designated.

To come to the song itself, it is sweet and musical in the Marathi, and though there are some metrical irregularities, it is skilfully put together and, with little doubt, by a Brahmin woman, probably in the last century. Each stanza has six short lines with the refrain *zo-re-zo*, the conventional refrain variously repeated, in cradle-songs, like the *lulla-lulla-lulla* of English lullabies.

In each verse except the fifth the thing asked for rhymes with the vocative designation of the person addressed, which explains the unexpectedness of some requests: the songmaker was hampered by the exactions of the metre in her choice of "longings." The sandalwood grove is pure poetry, for such groves must be very rare in the Maharashtra—if they exist. Not only does the fragrance and costliness of sandalwood make it a poetical appurtenance, but the Marathi *chandan van* is as musical as clinking silver and recurs often in women's songs.

In the first verse *ghosu* (by poetical licence from *ghos*) is rhymed with *sasu* and the metre allows no explanation, so each singer may fancy these clusters to be of flowers, fruits, pearls or other gems, as she likes. In the second verse the dried fruits (*usarya*) are those of fruit-bearing vegetables—pumpkins, many kinds of gourds, cucumbers, brinjals, etc. These are sometimes sliced or grated and highly spiced before they are dried, and are then called *sandge*, a very savoury relish.

In the third verse one does not expect a diamond from a sandalwood grove, but what will rhyme so desirably with the vocative *Dira* as *hira*? In the fourth verse better rhymes could have been found for *nanand* than Govind, but this was chosen because it is a name of Krishna. Though he too has no special connection with a sandalwood grove, at least *chandan van* finds an echo in *vrinda-van*, Krishna's wood near Gokul that is now Brindaban, where pilgrims flock each year.

In the fifth verse *khan*, a generic term for all sorts of goodies sweet or spiced, could so easily have been rhymed with *zau* that I am inclined to think the original composition had such a rhyme, and was changed later by someone who wanted to require rather more of *zaubai*: the wives of two or more brothers are proverbially

inclined to be jealous of each other and ambitious to be the favoured *sun*, or daughter-in-law of the house.

In the last four verses the word I have translated *dear* is the very common vocative particle *ga*, which is used in addressing a woman or girl who may be *thou'd*. It may be affectionate and coaxing, or contemptuous, or even rude, according to the occasion or the tone in which it is spoken. How great a difference the tone makes in the English endearment, *my dear*! In English there is no equivalent of *ga*, unless it is the *co* I have seen in Cornish stories.

In the sixth verse *meva* rhyming with the vocative Bhava may mean confectioneries or conserves as well as fruits. In the eighth verse the necklace and bracelets are to be ordered for the expected little one; and in the ninth the lying-in room is to be made ready. To-smear-with-cowdung is one word in Marathi, as, no doubt, in all Indian languages. Earthen floors must be so smeared, and regularly, to keep them smooth and easy to sweep. Besides, the dung of the cow, who is in herself the dwelling place of all the gods, is held to be both pure in itself and purifying. Smeared anywhere it will cleanse away all ceremonial defilement, and after the lying-in, this same room would be smeared again to purify it from the abhorred pollution of childbirth.

A girl is often sent to *maher* for her first confinement, for then especially she needs the assurance of her mother's presence and care; and some women always go to their mothers for their lying-in. A proverb says that even gruel at *maher* makes the whole body lustrous—gives it the bloom of health. 'Be it ever so humble there's no place like *home*.' There are few sweeter words in a Maharashtra woman's vocabulary than this word *maher*: it has become a synonym for a refuge from care, a place of rest and delight. And in this song the consummation of all the girl's longings is her mother: with her mother beside her all will be well.

## II

O you who sit in the court house,  
 You my father-in-law,  
 My elder brother is come to take me,  
 He has halted his horse by the tamarind tree.  
 To my mother's house for eight days send me—  
 On the ninth day to your Rao and house I will return.

Why do you ask me, my maiden *sun*?  
 Go ask your mother-in-law.

O you who swing the cradle,  
 You my mother-in-law,  
 My elder brother is come to take me, *etc.*

Why do you ask me, my maiden *sun* ?  
Go ask your brother-in-law.

O you who sit on chairs,  
    You my brother-in-law,  
My elder brother is come to take me, *etc.*

Why do you ask me, my maiden *bhauzai* ?  
Go ask your sister-in-law.

O you who sit by the hearth,  
    You my sister-in-law,  
My elder brother is come to take me, *etc.*

Why do you ask me, my maiden *zan* ?  
Go ask your younger brother-in-law.

O you who play trapstick,  
    You my younger brother-in-law,  
My elder brother is come to take me, *etc.*

Why do you ask me, my maiden *bhauzai* ?  
Go ask your younger sister-in-law.

O you who play with basket and winnower,  
    You my younger sister-in-law,  
My elder brother is come to take me, *etc.*

Why do you ask me, my maiden *bhauzai* ?  
Go ask your lord.

O you who sit aloft to watch the corn,  
    You my lord,  
My elder brother is come to take me, *etc.*

Well do you ask me, my maiden bride,  
Go with your brother to your mother's house.

This song is a favourite with little village girls, who sing in turn the different parts. It originated probably in the middle strata of castes, and is the usual village jingle of irregular lines and rhymes. The word I have translated *maiden* is Gauri, a name of Parvati, wife of Shiva, and an old-fashioned term for a little girl before she reaches puberty. By *Rao* the little bride means her own husband. Wives often speak of their husbands as *Rao Saheb*. It is evident that she is married to the second son of the house, since her elder brother-in-law sits on chairs as a clerk,



perhaps, while young Rao sits or stands on a rough platform in the cornfield to watch the corn and keep away the birds ; and since her brother-in-law's wife is old enough to sit by the hearth and do the family cooking while her mother-in-law sits by the hanging cradle and pulls the cord to keep it swinging.

I have translated *iti-dandu* trapstick, after Molesworth, because in this game a short thick stick pointed at both ends is put in the 'trap'—a little hollow in the ground, something as the ball was placed in the old-fashioned game of trapball played with sticks by little boys in England. The basket and winnower with which Rao's little sister plays are toy copies of the things that are used for the daily cleaning of the various grains and pulses in common use.

One amusing thing in this song is that the little Gauri in her anxiety to do full honour to her Rao's family addresses each one with a plural designation, so that the Marathi reads, 'you my fathers-in-law, mothers-in-law, etc.' Her husband she addresses as *swami*, also in the plural vocative, 'You my lords.'

In this song Gauri rides away with her Dada to *maher*, a superlative happiness, but any messenger from *maher* is a great happiness, even if he comes only with news, messages, and inquiries, and brings, as in another song, only a tasselled hair-cord and a new comb, the little hand-cut wooden comb that used to sell for an anna, or even two or three pice. Sometimes he brings a *sari* and bodice, sometimes a gold or silver trinket, and usually something to eat, some favourite goodies or at least a pungent savoury snack in a folded *bhakar*, the thin unleavened cake of bread eaten throughout the Maharashtra : he rarely comes empty-handed, however poor they may be at *maher*.

### III

I will end with a series of ovi grinding songs which show even more clearly what *maher* means in Marathi married life.

#### I

Talk at *sasar* is a bitter *Karali* leaf ;  
But with sweet words my father gave me away.

#### II

Scoldings at *sasar* are like silken knots :  
Tied round the throat they cannot be loosened.

#### III

Scoldings at *sasar*, like a loose bamboo in the eaves,  
Strike one smartly whether one comes or goes.

## IV

Scoldings at *sasar* are bitter poison cups,  
But for your sake, my mother, I drink them as sweet.

## V

Though scoldings at *sasar* be as bunches of cactus,  
Bear them daughter of a noble family, my Usha Tai.

## VI

Tyrannized by her mother-in-law, tormented by sister-in-law,  
How she has paled, my star of Venus !

## VII

Her *sasu's* tyranny makes her weep at every step,  
But, daughter of great folk, she tells it to no-one.

## VIII

The father gave and sits at his ease on the verandah ;  
But the mother is in grief for their welfare.

## IX

As one rubs the sandalwood, so I wear myself away :  
Your worthy daughter will I be, my father king.

## X

As one saws sandalwood, so I my body saw,  
For the sake of your good name, my father.

## XI

I have hunger in my belly, I tighten my *sari* knot,  
For the sake of your good name, my father.

## XII

Giving me this daughter-birth, God blundered :  
He but hitched a bullock to the oil press, for life.

## XIII

Not again, beloved Hari, life as a daughter :  
Night and day it is subjection to others.

## XIV

As mother earth watches for the rain,  
So do I long for *maher*.

## XV

On the way to *maher* crowds the soft cool grass :  
On the way to *sasar* are only pricking thorns.

## XVI

My father is as God, my mother is Banaras,  
And at my feet is the sacred bull, my brother king.

## XVII

In boiling water rice is cooked ;  
And in my lord's anger I ripen joy.

## XVIII

My soul to his have I given,  
But he like a stone in water is all dry within.

## XIX

At times the full moon shines, at times the dark new moon ;  
At times nectar I drink, at times, friend, it is poison.

## XX

Weep not, my friend, all will be well,  
How long does the blackness of the new moon last ?

## XXI

Weep not, weep not—again the bud will bloom,  
Again in your house will swing the cradle.

## XXII

Of the mango blossoms not all turn to fruit,  
And of the fruits how many never ripen !

## XXIII

The *nachni* husk, not of any use is it—  
Give me not again birth as a girl, O Ram.

## XXIV

First thing in the morning I did my smearing and sprinkling,  
And then in my door stood the sun god.

## XXV

First thing in the morning I go to the cow's byre  
And take the holy name of Govind.

## XXVI

First thing in the morning I sprinkle the cow's stale,  
And my husband's house is holy.

## XXVII

What the gardener in his garden sowed has sprouted :  
What my darling mother taught has come of use.

## XXVIII

Husking and grinding, all to me is play :  
My mother gave me the bent for work.

## XXIX

Husking and grinding, all to me is play :  
But to go far for water, that is work.

## XXX

Sasubai's tyranny she swallows silently,  
And with her lord she laughs, my Usha Tai.

## XXXI

She burns within, in her heart she weeps ;  
But with her lord she laughs, my Usha Tai.

## XXXII

Sandalwood, sandalwood—twelve names the *chandan* has !  
But bring for me the tall *chandan* tree—my brother king.

## XXXIII

Her husband asks, where are you gone, my darling ?  
It is behind him she is standing with a smiling face.

## XXXIV

Her husband's anger boiled over like milk,  
But laughing she quieted him, Usha Tai.

## XXXV

My merit of a hundred lives has fruited.  
Like the sun is the bloom of my wifehood.

## XXXVI

I chopped my sandalwood, twelve pieces I made of it,  
O foolish is womankind—there is little love in men.

## XXXVII

Have done with your weeping, spill not your courage, friend :  
Again shall your lap be beautiful with a suckling babe.

## XXXVIII

Let come to me what will—I care for nothing,  
If only so in happiness my lord shall live.

## XXXIX

Without rain, no harvest for the earth :  
And for a woman, no joy without a spouse.

## XL

Like the basket-hidden cobra is the son-in-law breed :  
Do you please him well, my Usha Tai.

## XLI

The son-in-law breed, it eats and leaves,  
But a son to the Ganges he will bear one's bones.

## XLII

A husband's anger—a live coal from the fire :  
Fulfill, my Usha Tai, all his desire.

## XLIII

At all three times of the day she worships the cow—  
For a suckling babe she hopes, my Usha Tai.

## XLIV

In the temple she garlands Mandi,  
A suckling babe she asks, my Usha Tai.

## XLV

In the temple is a mountain of sons—  
Give quickly one to my Usha Tai.

## XLVI

Daily I swept the god Narayan's treasury,  
And so a pearl I found, my Gopu babe.

## XLVII

O money lender, lord of lakhs, your storeys with mirrors are hung:  
But your loins no son have fruited, your wealth is become as coals.

## XLVIII

O money lender, lord of lakhs, on your verandah burns a lamp  
But your loins no son have fruited, who plays there ?

## XLIX

In my courtyard sits a diamond,  
Your husband, my Usha darling.

## L

When I ask for jewels you call me foolish,  
But who if not you shall pay my desire ?

## LI

No bracelet I ask, no necklace of moons—  
One jewel suffices me, my wedding necklace.

LII

One jewel I ask of you today,  
In every birth keep this handmaid at your feet.

LIII

A jewel I ask, my lord, say not *No* :  
Love is your wife's longing, not silver or gold.

LIV

Give me, O God, gold for my children,  
Rest for the suckling babe upon my lap.

LV

Storey upon storey and stairs of sandalwood,  
And there a golden image combs her hair, my Usha Tai.

LVI

A horse of a thousand rupees, of fifty, the trappings,  
And sitting him, one like a rosetree's blossom.

LVII

Evening is come, come is the lord of good fortune ;  
Now in every room let the lights sparkle.

LVIII

Evening is come, make haste to light the lamps ;  
Lakshmi is come, now fill her lap with pearls.

LIX

Evening is come, a lamp for the verandah,  
Loose the calves to the cows, my Gopu boy.

LX

Evening is come, hustle and bustle,  
The herdsmen bring the cows from the pastures.

LXI

Evening is come, let us put fire on the hearth,  
But first put your babe to sleep, Usha Tai.

LXII

Evening is come, a clamour of kine,  
And with rice we have worshipped Lakshmi.

LXIII

God's is the gift—what can man give ?  
Only let Lakshmi be helper of my son.

## LXIV

House by the wayside once and buttermilk to all who come :  
Preserve your father's name, my Gopu son.

## LXV

House by the wayside, *maher* of all who come and go,  
There everyone gets bread and salt.

## LXVI

The day is gone, the plantain tree shuts out the sun,  
But my messenger to *maher* has not returned.

## LXVII

They play in my courtyard, they shout in my lane.  
With wealth of children my daughter is come home.

## LXVIII

At my mother's brother's house I am a guest,  
They have lit the tall lamps in celebration.

## LXIX

My neighbour, let us use the same door,  
And my *mama* with your parrot shall play.

## LXX

Past my door went an elephant,  
And in a palanquin my mother's daughter.

Oral literature may be said to be the Cinderella of anthropological studies. One of the great tasks for the future is to bring together and classify the native literary records of the peoples of the world. Records should be sought which are as independent as possible of neighbouring higher cultures, and of the widespread Greco-Roman, Arabic, and Indian literatures. It is only in remote areas that literatures of native development, comparatively unaffected by such great cultures, can survive. The evidence of these native literatures is essential to a comprehensive survey of Man's intellectual history.

NORA CHADWICK

# PREMARITAL PUBERTY-RITES OF GIRLS IN WESTERN MAHARASHTRA

BY DURGA BHAGWAT

The problem of the puberty-rites of girls is very interesting and one of the most neglected by Indian anthropologists. The mutual attraction of the sexes, the importance attached to virginity, the initiation into the secrets of sex-life and the physiological, surgical, and spiritual accessories traditionally utilised during the operation of the rites, are some of the most vital points of study that are directly based on these customs.

Puberty-rites are very common, even essential among the Hindus. They take place either (1) at the advent of the first menstruation whether the girl is married or not, or (2) at the first menstruation before marriage,<sup>1</sup> or (3) at the first menstruation after marriage.

Premarital puberty rites are not very common and need a good deal of investigation.

The chief points worth consideration in this respect are:— (1) actual ceremonies, songs, dances etc.,<sup>2</sup> (2) ceremonial defloration<sup>3</sup> (3) symbolical defloration and (4) mock-marriage.<sup>4</sup>

Among primitive people, sex-relationship between girls and boys starts much before marriage and many a time even before puberty. In parts of the aboriginal territory where the dormitory system still prevails, on the advent of puberty girls get an entrance into the dormitory. No elaborate ceremonies take place at this time. The girl has to observe the menstrual seclusion for four days in a special hut (*chhuwākuriā*). But in many places

<sup>1</sup> This is the commonest form of puberty-rites. In many communities the marriage of the girl takes place before puberty; but even when it takes place after that, the real puberty-rites are performed after marriage. They are called the Garbhādhāna rites in Sanskrit or Gauna in Hindi. In Marathi it is called 'oṭī bharane' (to fill the lap), 'padar dene' (to take the padar of the sari) and 'phul' or 'wadi bharne' (wearing of flowers).

<sup>2</sup> These customs are more prevalent in Africa than anywhere else. Cf. Junod, *Life of a South African Tribe*, Baranya Vol. I., p. 71; Stayt, *The Bovenda*, p. 106; Roscoe, *The Bakitara*, pp. 263 ff.; Banyankhola, p. 117; Talbot, *Tribes of the Niger Delta*, p. 175; Lindblom, *The Akamba*, pp. 39, 42, 71. For the rites in the South Seas, see Ruth Benedict, *Patterns of Culture*.

<sup>3</sup> Actual defloration of the girl occurs among the Lingayats in the temple. Cf. *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, I, pp. 221—223. The Roman bride was made to sit on the lap of mutinus. In Samoa a girl is deflowered with a rod. In Africa among some Negro tribes the chief or the priest deflowers a girl. Cf. Ploss and Bartels, *Woman*, Vol. II, p. 40. Ceremonial defloration, pp. 71 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. IV, marriage with grandfather p. 179; marriage with a pot. p. 442.



like the south eastern portion of the Central Provinces, admission to the dormitory is given earlier than puberty. However as in this part the dormitory system itself is on the verge of extinction, little data are obtained as regards puberty and the social and religious conventions pertaining to it.

In the western portion of Maharashtra, in the Konkan and round about Bombay, some such curious practices still prevail among some agricultural communities. In the Choukalshi and Pachkalshi communities, when a girl gets her first menses before marriage, the fact is kept secret from the people and she is given a bath on the fourth day. A cocoanut is waved round her face and is broken and thrown away secretly and water is poured on the girl's feet. This rite is called *chorte pānī* (secret water). In the Ratnagiri district the Marathas and Kunbis have a much more elaborate rite. It is called *kuwarāchā limb* or 'The lime tree of puberty'. The girl remains in seclusion for the first four days and on the fifth day, with the same sari which she has been wearing for the last four days, she sits on the lap of her maternal uncle. The maternal uncle becomes naked and covers himself only with a woollen blanket and holds a stick of the 'toran' plant in his hand. Sometimes they are thus made to sit under a pandal of the sticks of the same plant. Women of the community then sprinkle water on them with twigs of the nim<sup>1</sup> tree. The uncle then carries the niece to the river and the whole crowd of women follow him singing songs of puberty or 'the songs of the lime tree'. In all these songs the girl is compared to the beautifully tended and fruitful tree of the lime, and the advent of menstruation is allegorically described. The ceremony, as I have already described it and the few songs that I have been able to procure, suggest ceremonial and symbolical defloration rather than a mock-marriage with the maternal uncle.

## SONGS.

### I

*From a Maratha woman of Ratnagiri :—*

The clouds thunder  
One boom follows another,  
The showers of 'Rohini'<sup>2</sup> have come,  
Then comes the rain of 'Mriga'<sup>3</sup>  
Each drop of rain is a pearl.

<sup>1</sup> The word for nim and lime being the same 'limb' in Marathi and as twigs of lime are not easily available the twigs of the nim tree are used instead.

<sup>2</sup> Rohini is a constellation. The sun is supposed to enter it somewhere at the end of May and June beginning. It brings the first showers.

<sup>3</sup> Mriga follows Rohini. In the month of June it thunders loudly and though the showers are still sudden the drops of rain are large and beautiful like pearls.

Sticks of 'toran' plant should be taken out,  
 The lime-tree of puberty<sup>1</sup> is going.  
 The lime-tree goes on the lap of the maternal uncle.  
 O lime-tree when do you go?  
 O lime-tree where do you do?  
 The lime-tree shall rest on the river side.  
 The lime-tree of puberty has gone there.

## II

*From the Kunbis of Ratnagiri :—*

It thunders,<sup>2</sup> O sister-in-law,  
 The clouds have sent showers, O sister-in-law,  
 The river has flooded, O sister-in-law  
 The snake has crawled,<sup>3</sup> O sister-in-law,  
 Time<sup>4</sup> has torn it, O sister-in-law,  
 The bird<sup>5</sup> has seen it, O sister-in-law,  
 The bird is afflicted in the sky, O sister-in-law,  
 It is scorched horribly, O sister-in-law,  
 The bird has seen it, O sister-in-law,  
 It is picked up in the beak, O sister-in-law.  
 And carried to the nest, O sister-in-law.

## III

Then the mother (of the snake) begins to wail,  
 And Narada began to think.  
 He told all the gods.  
 Shankar then found out a trick.  
 He joined his arrows  
 And made the sea.  
 In the sea he threw a fish.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kuwar also means menstruation of a virgin.

<sup>2</sup> Thunder is invariably connected with the advent of puberty. It is disturbing like thunder and a shock. Just as the arrival of the rain is announced by the thunder so also puberty of a marriageable girl should be announced by the songs etc.

<sup>3</sup> The flooding of the river is the enlargement of the womb and the serpent is the menstrual flow which runs smoothly. Usually, the snake is compared with the male sexual organ.

<sup>4</sup> There is a pun on the word *kāla*. It means 'enemy,' 'time' and 'fate.' It requires time for the womb to mature and menstruate. When it is taken to mean an enemy, it suggests defloration.

<sup>5</sup> The bird, the eagle, is the natural enemy of the snake. The bird in the song is the male sex, which is evidently disturbed at the sight of menstruation. The lifting up the snake in the beak suggests defloration.

<sup>6</sup> The song is a sequel to the former one and describes impregnation. The fish is the embryo which swims in the fluid in the uterus.

Then all the gods got rid of their sin  
 Now which god suffers from sin ?<sup>1</sup>  
 I ask you, who suffers from sin ?  
 The fish is called the 'divine fish.'<sup>2</sup>  
 The fish contemplated and became a crocodile.  
 One Veda is made on the crocodile.<sup>3</sup>  
 Likewise four Vedas were made  
 On four different occasions.  
 The son of the Kunbi then contemplated  
 He made a fishing-net  
 And caught the fish.

## IV

The plough is of gold and of silver the plough-share.  
 The son of the Kunbi contemplated.  
 In the fifth hour he sowed the lime-seed.  
 The lime-seed was sown and it got one leaf.  
 It got one leaf and then got two leaves.  
 It got two leaves and then three leaves.  
 It got three leaves and then four leaves.  
 After the advent of the fifth leaf the lime-tree assumed colour  
 and form.  
 Then the lime-tree was given a support<sup>4</sup>  
 The lime-tree got tired and spread on the pandal<sup>5</sup>  
 Then the lime-tree got many leaves  
 Then the lime-tree began to blossom<sup>6</sup>  
 Then I took a basket in hand  
 And plucked the limes  
 And took them to market.

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<sup>1</sup> The sin of tearing the snake or defloration.

<sup>2</sup> The whale or 'deb-māsa' is very much extolled in the folk-love of the Konkan.

<sup>3</sup> The Veda of the crocodile is a fiction.

<sup>4</sup> There is pun on the word *tedhā* which means the support of a stick which is given to the tender plants, and also pain—especially uterine pain. The stick also suggests defloration.

<sup>5</sup> The uterine pain causes exhaustion. The pandal suggests marriage.

<sup>6</sup> The blossom and the yield of fruit suggest fertility.

# THE ATTITUDE OF INDIAN ABORIGINALS TOWARDS SEXUAL IMPOTENCE

By VERRIER ELWIN

## I

So difficult is it to obtain information on the subject of sexual impotence from Indian aborigines that in all the anthropological literature of the sub-continent, barely half-a-dozen references will be found.<sup>1</sup> The reader, therefore, must remember that, however unsatisfactory this paper may be, it is the first of its kind and even the scanty information it contains took years to collect. The aborigines are not shy about admitting the fact of impotence or at least others are not backward in accusing their neighbours of it—but their bad memories, their lack of introspective observation, their indifference to times and dates, their unwillingness to attend hospital or clinic regularly makes anything like a collection of case-histories almost impossible.

In the preparation of this paper I must express my indebtedness for the constant help of my friend Mr. Shamrao Hivale in collecting material, and to Dr. K. Masani of Bombay for reading the paper and assisting me with his expert criticisms.

## II

### THE PREVALENCE OF IMPOTENCE

Stekel begins his great work on *Impotence in the Male* with a solemn warning. 'In men love-inadequacy is increasing to an alarming degree, and impotence has come to be a disorder associated with modern civilization. The percentage of relatively impotent men cannot be placed too high. In my experience, hardly half of all civilized men enjoy normal potency. Nowadays *ejaculatio praecox* is no longer a disorder; it is the regular accompaniment of civilization.'<sup>2</sup> Among the aborigines, however, cases of impotence of any kind are extremely rare.

<sup>1</sup> Our knowledge of the Indian eunuch is, however, more extensive. There is an interesting note in N. M. Penzer, *The Ocean of Story* (London, 1925), Vol. III, pp. 319-329; and references to the eunuch classes of different parts of India may be found in most of the reference books. Thus, the Pavaya eunuchs are described in A. K. Forbes, *Ras Mala* (1924), Vol. II, p. 95 and *The Bombay Gazetteer* (1899), Vol. IX, Part I, p. 506 and Part II, p. 21; the Hijra or Khasua by R. V. Russell and Hiralal, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces* (London, 1916), Vol. III, pp. 206-209, the Khoja by E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, (Madras, 1909), Vol. III, pp. 288 f.

<sup>2</sup> W. Stekel, *Impotence in the Male*, English Translation, (New York, 1939), p. 1.

This is what we might expect. The tribesmen lead a simple, out-of-door life. Neurasthenic and morbid conditions are rare. Their food has a low albuminous content and is rich in Vitamin E—a diet that should be favourable to potency. There is an almost complete absence of the homosexual impulse. They rarely masturbate. They do not practise *coitus interruptus* and are free from any consequent prostatic weakness or anxiety neurosis that might lead to impotence. Out of 2000 married Murias examined in Bastar, only 3 were absolutely impotent and only 9 relatively impotent—these admitted that their wives had betrayed them because 'they could not satisfy them'—almost certainly a reference to *ejaculatio praecox*.

In view of this it is strange to read in Stekel—'One may attempt to solve this question by studying the erotic life of primitive races. It is erroneous to think that primitive peoples experience a richer sexuality and possess a stronger sexual appetite than civilized man. On the contrary, exhaustive research proves that sexuality in primitive races is subject to numerous limitations and reveals a more rut-like (periodic) character. Their erotic life is poor in comparison with the ecstasies of civilized man. The psychic component of love is almost unknown to them.' When we turn to the footnote to see what Stekel means by 'exhaustive research' we find references to only two books—Freud's *Totem and Taboo* and Byschan's *Die geschlechtlichen Ausserungen der Naturvolker in Handbuch der Sexualwissenschaften*. As a matter of fact, there has hardly been any research at all, let alone any 'exhaustive research' into the sexual life of primitive man. Such intimate knowledge as we have is far from supporting Stekel's generalizations, which appear to be based on the opinions of missionaries, officials and travellers—the most untrustworthy of all informants.

Primitive libido, I agree, is somewhat weak, but since tribal institutions and customs are well adapted to correct this deficiency, the fact is of little practical importance. The essential point remains. Out of 2000 Muria marriages, only 12 were ruined by impotence. Had they been in civilisation, according to Stekel the figure would have been in the neighbourhood of 1000.

And this in spite of the fact that the tribesmen are often enervated by malaria and usually undernourished. Many of the more sophisticated suffer from venereal disease. With few other pleasures to divert them, they tend to indulge excessively in sexual intercourse. This intercourse is attended by many dangers, some connected with the act itself, others arising from the enmity of witch or rival. Primitive life is deeply marked by fear and anxiety.

## III

## IMPOTENCE IN WOMAN

Let us first consider briefly impotence in woman, a subject on which it is naturally difficult to get much information. A deficient libido seems to be rare. In Patangarh (Mandla District) it is said that 'a girl who loves food and sleep has cold blood and doesn't want intercourse.' The Pardhans tell of a girl who always tied her clothes very tightly round her body in order to delay her husband's approach and would bite and kick him crying 'Go and have your own mother instead.' But it was not known whether her frigidity extended only to her own husband or to all other men as well.

Real impotence, that is to say a condition in which sexual desire is present but the achievement of orgasm is prevented by some physical defect or psychological inhibition, is more common. A young Gond once came to us saying that his wife's vagina was closed: it had no opening. This turned out to be nothing more than an unperforated hymen—but so uncommon is the existence of this organ in a mature girl that the neighbours had no idea what it was. A Pardhan girl used to be terrified of intercourse because of the pain it caused her. I know of a Gond woman who suffered from prolapse of the uterus which kept her in constant pain. After a time she found she could get no pleasure at all in intercourse and could not attain orgasm. Her desire for her husband continued and she insisted on his making love to her, but invariably stopped him at a certain point. She made no objection when he took a second wife, only stipulating that he should sleep with her every other night, but without sexual congress.

There is a curious story of a Pardhan with a frigid wife. He was devotedly in love with her, but the girl did not care for intercourse and used to adopt all sorts of tricks to avoid it. Sometimes she would pretend to be ill in order to repulse her husband. But he would take no notice. One day she actually pretended to be dying, but all her husband did was to exclaim, 'O mother, she is going to die: let me embrace her one last time before the body gets cold' So saying he approached her, but she was so amused that she burst out laughing. Another woman could not endure intercourse with her husband because of his long beard. Another so feared his rough handling that as dusk fell she would sit weeping at the thought of 'entering the tiger's den' and soon divorced him.

Fear of infection, fear of being watched or disturbed during the act, and fear of becoming pregnant occasionally operate

and I have known cases of each kind. But anxiety neurosis caused by *coitus interruptus* and impotence due to a dread of the climacteric does not, I think, exist.

## IV

## IMPOTENCE IN MAN

Among men impotence is probably more common. It is only rarely, however, that I have met cases where the *impotentia coeundi* has continued for a long time: it is more commonly a temporary condition due to strain, over-excitement or anxiety, and passes off after the proper magical treatment has been undertaken.

Among the Muria, for example, impotence is more common as an accusation than as a fact. This will account for the comparatively large vocabulary of terms, mainly Halbi and Chhattisgarhi, used to describe it, for to a Muria girl a sexual failure of twenty-four hours merits the charge. The words, however, are not really very unkind or scornful. *Terwa* means 'crooked,' *thotha* means 'blunt,' *baila* means a 'bullock' and after all a bullock is a very useful animal. Other words are *karba* (small), *lerga* (crooked) and *murda* (a corpse). *Thāt ni ute* means that 'the cart pole does not rise into position.' The only Gondi word for this condition is the interesting *doko*, which is a negative form of *dokāna* or *tokāna*, meaning 'to peck.' This word is often used, at a festival, of chickens which are offered consecrated rice at which they have to peck before they are sacrificed, and *doko*, therefore, seems to imply the inability to peck at one's special food. The fact that only one of these expressions is in Gondi still further emphasises the absence of impotence among the unsophisticated aboriginals.

## V

## THE SUPPOSED CAUSES OF IMPOTENCE

The tribesmen have been acute enough to grasp the essential fact that it is only rarely that there is a physical cause for impotence; in fact a Gond once assured me that *ejaculatio praecox* could not possibly be due to illness. On the other hand, of course, there are well-known and often discussed instances of organic abnormalities of the sexual apparatus, the damage done to the penis by venereal disease, an occasional case of phimosis. An Agaria in Lapha ascribed impotence to worms. 'Some men,' he said, 'have worms in their stomachs, which devour them like leeches. They are very thin and long and curl themselves into the tube that runs from the penis to the stomach (spermatic duct?) and thus make the penis weak and flabby.'

Dyspareunia is sometimes recognised as a cause. For example, a young educated aboriginal of about 25 has a beautiful wife, from whom he has had two children. But for long periods he finds himself impotent with her—though potent enough with other women—and the reason they both give is that while he has an unusually small penis, she now has an exaggeratedly large vagina and long pendulous breasts, with the result that her husband can get no pleasure from intercourse with her. This knowledge serves to make him impotent, though he is very fond of her and jealous.

Those men whose private parts are underdeveloped are the subject of constant ragging and not a little real scorn. It is the large phallus that makes a man a man, and earns him admiration in the village. A constant sense of sexual inferiority, and dread that a girl will laugh when she sees the small organ or mock at him when it is inserted, sometimes makes a man of this kind impotent.

Boys who are married to older girls are accused by their wives of sexual inadequacy. A Muria boy at Jamkot said, 'My wife was much older ; how could my little penis please her ? She used to go to her mother's house, and when I went to fetch her back, would say, " Do you think I can be happy sleeping with your pots and dishes ? I want a man to live with." ' Another Muria, who was also married to an older girl, said, ' My first wife was always dissatisfied because of my small penis. She used to leave me at home and go to dance the Chait Parab dances, for she came from the lowlands, and loved them. At last she met a man there who could please her, and left me. But my next wife was very happy.'

The tribesmen sometimes attribute impotence to sexual excess, ' if a man goes to a woman and leaves his penis in her all night.' A Dhanwar of Korba declared that when a man goes continually to girls from childhood, he gets worn out and is impotent at thirty. Another cause is the man's anxiety that he will be unable to accomplish the daily or twice-daily intercourse that his wife is almost certain to demand of him. This specially operates when he is tired, or drunk, or anxious about something else. The very sense that this exacting demand is going to be made deprives him of the power to respond to it.

It is often said that a husband will be impotent with a nagging wife. A Dhimra was always being accused by his wife of unfaithfulness and sneered at for every possible cause, and he told me that he found himself quite incapable with her, though potent enough with other women.

Aesthetic repugnance is an occasional, not very frequent, cause of impotence. Thus, in one case the husband could not



endure his wife's bodily odour, and although she was beautiful he found himself so repelled by this that he could not achieve erection, and had to send her away. In another case, a Pardhan confessed that he was unable to copulate with a very famous and beautiful Pardhan girl because of her habit of gasping and crying out with pleasure during intercourse, and because she responded with movements of her body. The Gonds greatly dislike the woman to take any part in intercourse; she must be completely still and passive.

The danger of becoming impotent by dressing in women's clothes is a belief of certain tribesmen. It may arise from the fact that this is a custom of the Indian eunuch. The Khyounghthas have a legend of a man who defeated a king and his army by persuading them to dress up as women and do women's work, which rendered them so effeminate that they were unable to resist attack.<sup>1</sup> Impotent Kukis also dress as women,<sup>2</sup> and it is said that when a Lushai is unable to do his work through laziness or cowardice he is dressed as a woman, and is put to women's work.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, in South India at one time men believing themselves to be impotent used to dress themselves as women and serve the goddess Hulgamma, to whom eunuchs were sometimes dedicated, in order to recover their virility.<sup>4</sup>

Impotence may be induced for a limited period if a woman catches a lock of hair in her mouth. So long as she holds it, her partner will be incapable; when she lets go, he will recover. This is a widespread belief. Consider this experience of a Chokh Agaria. 'I took a Kawar girl to the side of a pond, but found myself impotent. I tried three times that night, but could do nothing. Fifteen days afterwards, she called me and said, "How strong you are! Yet could do nothing to me. But today I will let you." So I went to her, and had no trouble. Then said she, "The first time I put my hair in my mouth, that's why you couldn't do it."'

Consider too this statement of a Ho of the Kolhan. 'When a man approaches a woman with penis erect, and it falls before her, it is because she has taken a lock of her front hair between her teeth in order to make him impotent.'

I have noticed elsewhere a rivalry between men and women, a desire to humble one another, so that the man makes magic

<sup>1</sup> T. H. Lewin, *Wild Races of South-Eastern India* (London, 1870), p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.

<sup>4</sup> F. Fawcett, 'Basivis: Women who through Dedication to a Deity assume Masculine Privileges', *J. Anth. Soc. Bom.*, Vol. II (1892), p. 343.

to enable him to prolong the act and wear the woman out, and she in turn takes steps to prevent him achieving the act at all.

Impotence is sometimes regarded as infectious. An Agaria told me that if you see an impotent man in a dream and go and sit by him, it may have disastrous results, and this may happen in waking life also. In the same way, a man may become impotent through walking accidentally over the *latch kur* plant (which has curling leaves), or if he steps over an old basket in which cow-dung has been thrown away.

It is commonly said that failure to find the hidden pot or to shoot the dummy deer at a Gond wedding will render the bridegroom impotent, but I doubt if anybody, even the bridegroom, believes this.

It is believed by certain tribes that domestic fidelity promotes potency. For example, Marvi Saphi, a Bison-horn Maria of Mathadi (Bastar), said that, 'I am 75 years old and have never been ill. No witch has ever succeeded in harming me. No wild animal dares come near me. I have always remained faithful to my wife, and have never had intercourse with another woman. This is why I am still potent to-day, and still able to go to my wife daily. My erection is still as strong as when I was a young man. Only then I was able to go to my wife two, three or four times a night. But now I only go once. But my wife is satisfied with me, otherwise she would have deserted me long ago. But if I had been like other men going from girl to girl, I could never have continued with such strength.'

## VI

### IMPOTENCE AND MAGIC

But much more commonly the tribesmen attribute impotence to witchcraft and magic. The actual cause, of course, is the fear of witchcraft and magic in their own minds that sets up an anxiety neurosis whether they will be potent and thus prevents normal tumescence.

Here are some examples of impotence caused by witchcraft. A Pardhan of Patangarh had congress with a Pankin witch. As he was leaving her, she said, 'Go your way—but when you approach others may it not rise; only for me may it rise.' He went home and next time he slept with his wife he found himself incapable of coitus. A Bison-horn Maria of Harmamunda (Bastar) described how shortly after his marriage a widow asked him to lie with her. He refused and she made him impotent. A Baiga of Pakhri had an affair with a girl who was a witch. As he left her, she touched his penis—'It was out of love for me, to stop me

going to anyone else'—and henceforth he was impotent with his wife. A Dhoba of the same neighbourhood said that 'when a woman sees that a lover is going to desert her, she calls him to her for the last time, and lies throughout the act with her fists clenched together behind her back. After that he will be impotent.' This is obviously sympathetic magic—that as the woman's hands are clenched so will the man's penis curl up.

If a witch gives *murdār gāli*, the abuse of impotence or 'corpse-abuse,' to a man he may become impotent.

But not only a witch, a jealous husband may also make an enemy impotent by magic. The usual method is to take a tendril of some creeper, or a centipede, or a bit of the shrub called *latch kur* which curls up when you touch it, or all three together, burn and powder them and put a little in your enemy's pipe. Then as the creeper curls and the centipede rolls into a ball, so will his penis curl up and never straighten. This was done to a Gond in Rewa State and to another Gond in Mawai. An alternative is to give the powdered root of an onion.

To make a man impotent, said a Juang of Pal Lahara, 'get a shoot from a young *tendu* tree<sup>1</sup> of not more than two or three leaves. On a Sunday morning before dawn throw haldi and rice at the plant, tie it twice with a thread of cotton, and in the name of your enemy twist it round in opposite directions.' The Juangs regard the *tendu* as very powerful in magic. If this charm is successful and your enemy is suitably humbled, then you may restore his potency if you twist the plant back again, rub it with a little castor oil and return home clapping the hands.

At the Laru Kaj ceremony in Mandla, the penis of the sacrificed pig is in great demand and is usually stolen by someone. In Silpiri a Dhoba fell in love with a Baiga girl. Her husband came to know of it, and quietly mixed a little of the burnt and powdered pig's organ with some tobacco and gave it to his rival who at once became impotent and was a rival no more.

Similarly a Gond of Lapha gave a thread from the cloth of a young mother which was stained with the lochial fluid to a rival to eat in his food, and he became impotent.

The Marias believe that 'sexual intercourse with a mad woman will result in complete loss of virility'.<sup>2</sup>

In Juang villages, impotence is usually attributed to witchcraft. The witch watches for some saliva trickling from the mouth of her sleeping victim. She catches it in an egg-shell, spits in it,

<sup>1</sup> *Diospyros melanoxylon*, Roxb.

<sup>2</sup> W. V. Grigson, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar* (Oxford, 1938), p. 262.

mutters a mantra and when she gets an opportunity puts a drop or two in his pipe. When the man next has a smoke, he goes impotent. Another method is to give an enemy a *jonda* caterpillar to eat (this is the caterpillar which in Mandla is called the *pān-bichia*). It should be roasted and powdered up in rice.

The Bhuiyas of Bonai State said that impotence was very rare among them, but they knew of cases when a faithless wife, who wished to avoid her husband's attentions, had made him impotent by magic or medicine. Such cases, they said, were usually cured by the medicine-man.

From the Muria ghotul (dormitory) in Bastar State cases are reported of youths (chelik) who, though fully potent with their dormitory mates (motiari), find themselves impotent with their wives after marriage.

This is usually attributed to a jealous motiari who resents her chelik being married to someone else. At Karagaon a chelik was married when he was very young, but continued to live in the ghotul and was paired off with a much older motiari. When the time came for the boy to live with his wife, this motiari made him impotent by her magic so that he would always come to the ghotul and not stay with his wife. Unfortunately the charm was so powerful that the boy was impotent in the ghotul as well as in his house and both girls deserted him. After the magician had diagnosed the trouble, the parents offered food-sacrifice, and the boy recovered.

A somewhat similar situation arises sometimes in the Juang dormitories. Basu Juang of Rangmatiya confessed how, when he was about nineteen and was sleeping in the dormitory, a girl (who was of the right clan for the purpose) came to him and said, 'Sleep with me.' He refused and she went away in a temper and made him impotent by magic. He was cured by the magician and was potent. But after his marriage he again became impotent and his wife left him. He was again cured by the magician and brought his wife back, and ultimately had eight sons and two daughters.

## VII

### IMPOTENCE AND THE SENSE OF GUILT

I have no doubt that many attempts are made to injure an enemy by all kinds of magic, that jealous women really do sleep with their fists clenched behind their backs, that angry husbands attempt to humiliate their rivals. But what operates to cause the impotence is obviously the psychological factor of suggestion—a sense of guilt and an anxiety based on a perfectly genuine belief in the power of the witch and the reality of sympathetic magic.

The sense of guilt is even more evident in cases where impotence has occurred after intercourse with a menstruating woman. As everyone knows, this is one of the most dangerous things that a man can do; perhaps the least of its penalties is a period of impotence. 'A menstruous woman', said a Gond, 'is not so dangerous in the morning. In the morning, the blood that flows from her is hot; in the evening it is cold. If a man goes to her in the evening, the chill enters his body and his seed is frozen. In the morning, the danger is less, though it is bad enough.'<sup>1</sup> I do not know how widely this idea is held; I have only heard it once.

Certainly if a man has been to a menstruating woman he will expect to become impotent, and thus probably will, at least for a time.

A sense of guilt—or perhaps simply a fear of being found out—often affects aboriginals who are potent enough with their wives, but find themselves impotent when they go to other women. But in most of the incidents known to me, this was only of a temporary character. In one case, a Pardhan became impotent on approaching his lover and then found himself in a similar condition with his wife. He was cured by a course of treatment by the magician.

The case of Marvi Boti, a Bison-horn Maria of Telam, is instructive. He fell in love with the wife of his younger brother who stood in a forbidden relationship to him, and this was naturally considered by everyone a very serious tribal offence. As a result of the intrigue the two brothers came to blows, and the younger was killed. Boti was sentenced to transportation for life. This was in 1926, and when he was released he described how he had no sexual desire at all while in jail, and that for a whole year after his release he found himself impotent, and only regained his powers after all the necessary sacrifices had been made, not only for purifying him from the inevitable defilement of prison life, but also to appease the angry spirits of the Dead who were offended at his breach of the tribal and moral law. Here it is probable that the fourteen years of compulsory abstinence combined with a sense of guilt made Boti impotent until his conscience was quietened by the necessary sacrifices.

Neurotic fears associated with the Vagina Dentata complex,<sup>2</sup> the belief that there is something dangerous in the physical act of sex, possibly reflecting castration anxieties or a general sense of guilt, also play their part: indeed these are so common that one would expect impotence to be more prevalent than it is.

<sup>1</sup> I notice a curious contrast from South Africa. Among the Kgatla 'impotence may be due to the man's having become infected through intercourse with a woman suffering from "hot blood".' I. Schapera, *Married Life in an African Tribe* (London, 1940), p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> See my article in the current number of *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*. (Vol. XIX, pp. 439-453).

## VIII

## CURES FOR IMPOTENCE

The cures suggested by the tribal medicine-men are on the whole very sensible, bearing in mind the probably psychological nature of the trouble and the universal belief in sympathetic magic. As long as the sufferer can be induced to do something about it, he has a chance of recovery. This is the 'manipulative activity' which Rivers found so admirable a protection against collapse among sufferers from war neuroses.

The cures are generally based on the principle of sympathetic magic. Thus we may put in the first place the remedy which bids the patient get a strong straight root—the *basseri kānda* and the *ban-massāla* roots are recommended—and eat it—so as to make the penis as strong and straight as the root.

In the same way, patients are advised to eat the genital organs of various animals. The virile organ of the bear is everywhere regarded as invaluable; unfortunately bears are dangerous and difficult to obtain. The testes of sambhar, pig, goat, bull, wild cat, buffalo, are eaten. Some people say that the penis of the goat is very effective. 'It should never be given away; it has great strength.' Others recommend cutting a wild cat's penis in half, and eating half cooked and half raw.

Wetti Munda, a Bison-horn Maria of Dhurli (Bastar), described how 'when I was a young man I used to eat monkeys' flesh with the result that I became very strong and active, and could hop from tree to tree like a monkey. Once when I was working in the jungle, a monkey fell from a tendu tree and died. I removed its organ, and roasted and ate it with the result that I became so potent that I needed four girls to satisfy me.'

In Muskel the Bison-horn Marias said that the parents of mankind ate the penis of a bear which was given them by Bhimsen, and thus had the power to create the human race. The woman ate more than the man, and this is the reason why women have more power and more pleasure in copulation.

The Murias also believe that the genitalia of a bear are a good cure for impotence, so is any part of a monkey's body which has been killed by a tiger. The flesh should be cooked and eaten, whereon 'a man will be strong for a day and a night even if he works all the time without rest.' The same effect is said to follow if the tooth of a dead crocodile is worn in the loin-cloth.

A Bharia cure for impotence is to 'take a twig on which two sparrows have copulated, and burn it. Then on a Sunday or a Wednesday eat the ashes with a black chicken cooked in the ordinary way. The patient will be cured and begging for his wife,

as alert and lively as a sparrow.' The sparrow, of course, is regarded by the tribesmen as the most lustful and erotically energetic of all birds.

Another sparrow remedy is to kill the male bird in the act of copulation. It should be roasted and eaten—some say only on the Sunday after Diwali, but these are Hinduised—and the bones should be carefully preserved. Eating the flesh will restore potency, and if a bone is kept in the mouth during the sexual act it will prevent premature ejaculation and will indeed prolong the act as long as it is retained. It should be removed when orgasm is required. Care, however, must be taken that the shadow of a menstruating woman does not fall upon it, or it will lose its power. The bone obviously symbolises the hard erect penis.

The Santals also give a sparrow, which must be male, as a cure for impotence. The sparrow is considered by this tribe as a specially potent bird, so much so that the expression 'like a sparrow' is used as a term of abuse.<sup>1</sup>

The Juangs cure impotence by a parasite on a *bija* tree<sup>2</sup>, a shoot of a *kandro* tree<sup>3</sup> tied to the waist, a root of the *pami-alu*<sup>4</sup> which has been dug up with one hand before dawn and eaten with one hand. Sometimes the magician takes a living worm from a *sarai* tree<sup>5</sup> and the liver of a black hen, roasts them together and gives them to his patients every day for a week. Another cure is to go 'on a Sunday and find a *suta* root, pull it straight up with a single jerk, tie it in a *siari* leaf<sup>6</sup> and roast it; open the leaf behind your back and cut up the root without looking at it. Then put the bits one by one into your mouth and you will be able to copulate for as many times as you have eaten bits.'

The Bhuiyas sometimes recommend a *jhia* fish caught on a Sunday and cooked wrapped in leaves. Both Bhuiyas and Juangs of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal recommend the following either to restore or to increase potency. 'Find a long gourd five years old with a parasite growing on it. On a Saturday offer it haldi and rice; on the following Sunday morning before cock-crow go naked and pick the gourd with your left hand; now offer it a hen; when you approach your wife tie a little piece of the gourd to your waist holding your breath as you do so—this will ensure that you do not suffer from premature orgasm. If you tie a piece of the gourd to your arm, your organ will become as thick as the arm.'

Treatment of a somewhat similar kind is recommended by the Bharias: I believe it is also known to the Gonds and Baigas.

<sup>1</sup> P. O. Boddington, *Studies in Santal Medicine* (Calcutta, 1927), Part II, p. 139.

<sup>2</sup> *Pterocarpus marsupium*, Roxb.

<sup>4</sup> *Bischofia javanica*, Bl.

<sup>6</sup> *Bauhinia vahlii*, W. and A.

<sup>3</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>5</sup> *Shorea robusta*, Gaertn. f.

'Take,' they say, 'a handful of cucumber seeds. Catch the semen of a horse as it goes to a mare. Mix them together and plant them. When the cucumbers grow and are three fingers thick and nine fingers long, eat them, and the penis will become as long and strong as the cucumbers.'

Bodding gives some Santal remedies for impotence. The first is to cure what he calls 'sexual inopia,' by which he means an absence of all desire for sexual intercourse in either sex. The remedy for this consists of a number of ingredients including raisins, poppy seeds, garlic and sugarcandy. But the important thing about it is that it is to be made into thirty pills, and the patient must swallow one of these with half a pound of milk daily for thirty days. The accumulated psychological suggestion is probably what actually achieves the cure.

For ordinary impotence there are three remedies—

(a) The roots of *Gymnema hirsutus*, W. and A., var. *Decaisneanum*, Wight.

The roots of *Tragia involucrata*, Jacq.

The roots of *Vernonia cineria*, Less., or *Glossogyne pinnatifida*, DC

A male sparrow.

Grind the first three and cook into a curry with the sparrow, and give to eat. The patient should eat only the pulse of *Phaeseolus Mungo*, var. *radiatus*, L..

(b) On Sunday kill a *Motacilla luzoniensis*, make a cup of its feathers in which the patient should eat his curry; dry the bird itself and cutting off a piece of it cook this in mustard oil and besmear the whole body therewith.

(c) The roots of *Tragia involucrata*, Jacq.

The roots of *Themuda gigantea*, Haskel.

Camphor.

Grind together and make into pills and let him take these for about a month.<sup>1</sup>

If a man who is normally potent suddenly finds himself failing as he approaches a woman, he realises (if he is wise) that she has concealed some hostile medicine in her hair, under her nails or in her loin-cloth. He must immediately search her body and remove the charm, and his normal strength will be restored.

<sup>1</sup> Bodding, op. cit., pp. 356 f.



I have mentioned two special causes of impotence—to walk accidentally over the *latch kur* shrub and to step over a basket that has been used for throwing away cow-dung. For these there are special remedies. To neutralise the effects of the shrub, pick a branch of it and take it to the kitchen. Wait till the leaves are well unfolded and then quickly thrust it into the fire. For as a man's penis curls up in sympathy with the leaves of the shrub, so now when the shrub can never curl up again, so the penis will remain erect.

As an antidote to stepping over the basket, 'take seven plaits of bamboo and bury them on the bank of a river, putting a little of the blood of a black chick on each. Let the patient walk round this seven times, then dig up the bamboos and throw them into the river.'

More or less meaningless, but excellent 'manipulative activity.'<sup>1</sup>

## IX

### THE ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY TO IMPOTENCE

What are the domestic and personal complications that follow a condition of impotence? Among women, frigidity or impotence seems to make her somewhat more desirable sexually: among a multitude of friendly women here is one that is difficult, one who rouses all the instincts of the hunter. But on a man, the effects of impotence may be disastrous.

For the aborigines have no idea of a 'Platonic' relationship: for them the 'right true end of love' is its physical expression. This does not rule out the possibility of a spiritual relation, but it does insist that the physical must express and interpret the desires of the mind and heart.

Let us consider a remarkable document that was recorded in the Muria village of Palli in Bastar State. A newly married boy found himself impotent—he had not experienced this embarrassment in the ghotul, but it was supposed to have been brought upon him by the hostile magic of a former lover. Yet however caused it threatened to destroy his happiness. This is how the other chelik described his wife's attitude—she was only a few weeks out of the ghotul, still practically a *motiari*.

'I didn't come to your house,' she is supposed to have said, 'just to eat rice. I could have got rice anywhere. I'm not going to stay here just looking at your face. You may have money,

<sup>1</sup> See W. H. R. Rivers: *Instinct and the Unconscious* (Cambridge, 1920), p. 54.

but that can only fill my stomach, not my heart. I could fill my stomach myself by going out to work. Well, now I'm off—anywhere, anywhere in the world so long as my heart can be filled. Where the heart is not filled, what girl will stay? God made man and woman for this very work. It was to fill each other's hearts that he made ants, worms, birds, rats, pigs, tigers and every other thing. They all live with their mates and copulate. They all marry and love comes out of their copulation. But I don't find love by just looking at your face. If your cart-pole could not rise into place, what did you marry for? When you saw me and knew that your heart was not captured, why did you ruin me? What am I to do now? Tell me. Where am I to go?'

Some of these phrases are probably traditional, for they occur in songs. A taunt song with a similar theme was recorded in another Muria village.

Here's a twig of the tendu tree,  
Here's the twig you were telling me of.  
No one can use it at either end.  
I have offered water in a brass pot,  
I have offered gruel in a leaf-cup,  
I have served him rice in a dish,  
I have given him curry in a leaf-cup,  
But he does not speak to me.  
He doesn't know what to do.  
I cannot live just looking at his house,  
I cannot live just to fill my belly.  
I can only live if my heart is filled.  
I will go away to my father's house.  
How can I live so long without my proper work?

The symbols in this song are sexual. The brass pot, the leaf-cup, the dish offered by the girl to her husband, and his useless toilet-twig are recognised symbols of the female and male genitalia. In the concluding lines the girl declares, as she did at Palli, that life is something more than just looking after a house or filling one's stomach with food. The word in the eighth line which I have translated 'He does not speak to me' also means 'He does not have intercourse with me' and thus gives the key to the whole song.

An impotent chelik's life in the Muria ghotul is not altogether intolerable, for there are nearly always more boys than girls, and it does not matter very much if one of them has to sleep alone. But once the boy has got married, his position becomes desperate. A former Kotwar of the Kapsi ghotul was impotent. To cover his embarrassment he used to leave his wife at home and go to sleep in the ghotul. Naturally he was not very popular there,

and after a time the motiari began to try to turn him out. They escorted him dancing and singing home to his wife, made him take her by the hand and said to her, 'Here's your husband. Sleep with him, beat him, do something with him; we don't want him in our ghotul.' Then they took a chicken from the house and went away, thus suggesting that they had again performed the final marriage rite when bride and bridegroom are put to bed together. After this had happened two or three times, the unfortunate youth gave up going to the ghotul—for he could not afford the continual loss of chickens—and went to sleep in any empty verandah or disused shed.

Among the Lakhers when a man is impotent and is unable to perform his conjugal duties, the wife can claim a divorce. Before the wife can obtain her divorce, however, the man is allowed a certain period, which varies in different villages but is usually a year, during which to perform sacrifices in order to recover his lost powers. If at the expiration of the period agreed on the man is still impotent, the woman is entitled to a divorce and to keep all the price she has received; she cannot, however, claim any unpaid balance of the price. During the period allowed for performing sacrifices, if the woman leaves her husband she is held to have divorced him, and will have to refund her price. But during this period the woman must watch her conduct carefully. If she has intercourse with another man, she is treated as an adulteress.

If a woman accuses her husband of being impotent and he denies the charge, an old woman is appointed to watch them and to report. If this old woman finds that the man is not impotent, the wife is ordered to live with her husband.<sup>1</sup>

Among the tribesmen of the Maikal Hills, impotence is a very powerful disturber of family life. The man who finds himself in this condition is deeply humiliated.

The Baiga feels the shame of impotence more than others, for his sexual powers are his pride and his constant boast. He can achieve the act more frequently and with more satisfaction to his partner than any other. The Pardhan too may almost be called a professional lover—if the expression is used without a derogatory meaning—and impotence strikes here, not so much at his tribal pride as at his artist's love of a bit of work well done. Perhaps the ordinary Gond is least affected, but even he feels an object of scorn and ridicule.

For the fact soon gets out. The wife at once begins to discuss the matter with her gossips, deriving a melancholy and masochistic pleasure from publishing abroad the shame of her husband's

<sup>1</sup> N. E. Parry, *The Lakhers* (London, 1932), pp. 345 f.

inadequacy. Taunt songs are shouted during the village dances. 'Even in a plough the nails are hammered straight and strong,' they cry. 'The branch of the tamarind sways to and fro, but it never breaks.' A Baiga song goes—

Whenever he sees a girl  
How he longs to take her !  
But his loins are powerless.  
Yet when he sees a girl,  
How lustily he swaggers !

In bed, the wife laughs at him. 'Shame on you, impotent fellow ! How did God think of making you ?' and 'O sister, he is terribly cold, tasteless as a dish of stale rice.'

These traditional rhymed taunt-phrases of the Gonds and Pardhans are very revealing.

1. *Tor kaniha āla rāsi*  
*Khāle bāsi*  
*Kala dhewābe phāsi.*

How weak your loins are !  
Eat some stale rice  
Or do you want to have me hanged ?

2. *Dhan re bāsi hatya*  
*Kahe la kare khātiya*

Shame on you stale murderer !  
Why have you ruined me ?

3. *Dekhe la nirmal chanda*  
*Dekhe ma lobh lagāi*  
*Chhuē ma thandha.*

To look at you're fine as the moon  
To look at you is to be filled with desire  
But how cold you are to the touch !

Other regular phrases are 'O my *alabela*, what has happened to you ?' 'It's all one to me whether my husband's at home or abroad.' 'To look at you are handsome as Krishna ; but all you can do is to fart loudly.' 'Your penis has no root in it—but how bravely you beat your drum.'

A Muria saying is—'God was making a woman, but forgot what he was doing and stuck a bit of skin by mistake in front of the corpse.'

A Juang taunt-song runs—

The bull-buffalo has brought a she-calf home.  
He paid a hundred rupees and loved her  
But the bull was impotent.

Another Juang song reveals some knowledge of sexual physiology.

The clitoris is the vagina's ornament  
The penis gets its beauty from the testes.  
If you cut off these two  
Man and woman will not live a day longer.

When a man finds himself impotent, the poor fellow may leave his house for good, or spend all his time in the fields and forest. A Pardhan of Patangarh was bewitched by a Pankin and found himself potent with her, but powerless with his wife who did not take a 'broadminded' view of the matter. 'I was frightened out of my life. She was a tigress. When she came into the house, I slipped out; when she went out, only then could I go in.'

Another boy of about nineteen suddenly found himself impotent. He could not face his young wife. He used to sleep away from her. The matter became known, people began to laugh. He felt utterly miserable and hid in the jungle. They went to fetch him home, but he could not talk to his wife. The poor girl, equally miserable, gave him his food, then he would run away without saying a word. He used to sleep under a munga tree, and she lonely and puzzled in the house. One day he had fever and she went to massage him, but he ran away from her. He came to us, and with good advice and put to some useful manipulative activity, recovered his powers and is now very happy.

To humiliation and shame is added the sense of frustration at missing 'the best thing in their lives,' the comfort and satisfaction of regular cohabitation. Worse still is a man's fear that his wife will run away from him and her suspicion that he is diverting his energy to someone else.

For this is the real tragedy of impotence among the tribesmen; it breaks up the home. The Gond wife, not without reason, is a very suspicious person, and when her husband fails in his duties she immediately supposes that he is deceiving her with someone else. If she finds that is not so, she then concludes that he has deceived her and that his impotence is his former lover's revenge. Either way, she has an excellent excuse for making her own arrangements. It is said that Gond girls, especially when newly married, nearly always run away under these circumstances; when there is a family of two or three children, they usually remain

faithful. There is a well-known case of a Gond at Karanjia who had three wives. He became impotent and all three deserted him.

The effect on the wife is undoubtedly something more than mere conjugal suspicion. There is a sense of repulsion and outrage, a feeling of humiliation that she is not sufficiently attractive to rouse her lord to action. She uses a very strong word, a word meaning 'corpse' to describe her futile husband. A dialogue overheard between two wives will illustrate what I mean very well. The first, complaining bitterly of her husband's inadequacy, said, 'He does it as if he were cleaning his ear!' To which the second with great pride answered, 'But my Raja does it so roughly that he makes me weep.'

The experience of an unhappy young Gond from Dhanaoli (Mandla District) is instructive. When he came to us no one could help being moved by his thin face and body and his miserable dead expression. 'I have become mad,' he said, 'I am so young, yet I am not worth a pie. All day long I feel miserable.' He had been married five times. The first wife, whom he married when he was about seventeen, was of the same age as himself, and he described how at marriage he had no difficulty in intercourse. Indeed he went to his wife four times on their marriage night, and then three or four times daily for a month. After this he began to weaken. 'I wanted to lie flat on the ground and do nothing.' His wife used to abuse him and threaten to run away. 'I would feel angry, but I knew why she was upset.' Then one day four months after he became impotent, she declared, 'I am young; I have the whole world in front of me; I will do anything I like,' and she left him.

Then he married again. But this time even on his marriage night he was only able to obtain a partial erection, and after a week his new wife ran away, 'For there was no pleasure in it for either of us.' He married a third time an older woman. But she too left him after a week. A fourth girl also left him. When I saw him he had taken yet a fifth wife, an older woman with a small boy from another man who was staying with him because she wanted a home. 'We sleep separately. My limbs don't feel that they belong to me. When I sit down, I want to remain sitting. All my limbs are cold.' Yet his genitalia were of the ordinary size. Though he claimed to be suffering from both syphilis and gonorrhœa there were no actual symptoms of either. He was a well-to-do man with gold ornaments. This accounts for the rather remarkable fact that, though it must have been well-known that he was impotent, he was still able to get women to marry him.

But the wife does not always run away. There are many women, generous and tender, whose love for their husbands can endure every kind of physical frustration—for example, the wives of lepers who are sometimes heroines of faithfulness and devotion. Take again this instance from Tikai Tola near Patangarh.

A Churelin<sup>1</sup> used to come to me. I became impotent. Every night I wetted my bed. Gradually I found I was not the man I was. The last time I went to my wife, it went on for a long time, and neither of us got any pleasure. Now my wife comes and goes. But she has not made another house. She never abuses me. She doesn't try to make me do it. She doesn't touch my penis or play with it, she just waits for me.

In another case well known to me where the husband suffers from premature ejaculation, the wife has remained faithful, 'for we love each other.' But she has used the situation to gain complete mastery of the domestic affairs of their home.

## X

### CONCLUSION

The aboriginal attitude to sexual impotence, therefore, is very much what we might expect. Impotence is not a common disorder. When it occurs, the cause may generally be traced to some psychological maladjustment, a sense of guilt, the fear of magic, an aesthetic repugnance. The cures proposed are sensible and often effective—a consoling visit to an experienced medicine-man, symbolic and dramatic exercises, concoctions based on that sympathetic magic so deeply rooted in the primitive mind.

Society is amused and tolerant, but the heroines of these domestic tragedies are less kindly. They are disappointed, offended and enraged. They can make a man's life a sad and burdensome affair. But once we leave aside the personal aspects of frustrated affection, the attitude of the tribal world at large is humorous rather than cruel.

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<sup>1</sup>A Churelin is the dangerous ghost of a woman who has died in pregnancy or childbirth.

# BETROTHAL DIALOGUES

By W. G. ARCHER

## I

### KHARIA DIALOGUES

LIKE the Uraons, Turis, Khonds, Gadarias and Birhors, the Kharias of Ranchi district in Chota Nagpur use certain symbolic dialogues when they are settling the marriage of a boy and a girl. They begin with private enquiries and when a provisional agreement has been reached, five men from the boy's side set off for the house of the girl. On their arrival, shortly after sunset, they squat down in the courtyard, but the girl's family, instead of according them a welcome, feign a complete indifference. The sticks of the party are not taken charge of, no water is brought for their feet, and they are treated as if they were the most dangerous of strangers. One of three formal dialogues then follows and it is only when its joking sentences are over that the five men are accepted for what they are and are ushered into the family.

The following three dialogues were recorded in Simdega village in 1940 and are typical of the dialogues in that village and thana.

## A

### THE DEER DIALOGUE

A : (*Leader of the bride's party*)—What are you looking for, brothers? Where are you coming from? Where are you going? Every one in the village is talking of the thieves that are abroad these days. Tell us plainly what your country is. Are you travellers or robbers?

B : (*Leader of the bridegroom's party*)—No, brothers. We are not thieves. We are not robbers. We are all respectable people and in fact we are the Dung-dung Rajas of Kandekera. It is a long time since we left our homes and we have all along been hunting in the jungles. The forest guard gladly gave us a permit and after we had got it, we worked down from Kandekera to Konmankel, going from jungle to jungle. On the way we came on a deer. We shot an arrow and hit it, but we did not bring it down and the deer bounded away. We followed its blood, and the trail brought us to Mainabera, a tola of this village. By the time we got in, we were very tired so we stopped for a rest. While we were resting, a man of your village, Budhu, came up and we said to him, 'Brother, we have chased a wounded deer up to this village. If it has gone into one of the houses, can you tell us which one it is in? We are worn out from going after it.'



Budhu replied, ' Brothers, a new deer has indeed run into Paita's cow-shed, but who knows whether it is the same deer or someone else's ? ' When we heard this, we went to the cow-shed and there was the very deer we had shot. Brothers, that deer is ours and we are waiting to take it away.

A : We shall, of course, show you the deer and give it back to you. But it was very badly wounded when it came and we had to treat it and bandage it. If you will pay us all that we have spent, we will give it to you.

B : Brothers, we must, of course, pay you what you have spent, but as we have been away from home for a long time, we have very little with us. And the deer is obviously ours, and not yours. Charge us therefore only what you have really spent, and nothing more.

A : We only want to save ourselves from loss and we shall naturally charge you only what is right. We had to use twelve pairs of oxen in ploughing up the roots for the wound, and twelve lengths of cloth had to go into the bandage. Give these to us and take your deer away.

B : We cannot give you as much as that. All we can offer is three bullocks.

A : We cannot possibly take only that. It does not cover even half of what we spent. We must insist on not less than five oxen and twelve lengths of cloth.

B : Very well, we agree. But let us see how the deer looks.

A : Come this way and we will show you the deer. (Then, to the people in the house) Brothers, sisters and children of the house, these people are not the thieves or robbers that we thought. They are now our guests: Wash their feet and pile their sticks in the house. [A ceremonial welcome then follows. The girls of the house wash their feet. The boys take their sticks and stand them in a corner, and the five envoys give the girls courtesy presents of two pice. A little later the bride is brought in and put on the knees of the boy's leader. Her girl friends follow her and when they are on the knees of the other men, a round of singing starts. The boy's leader then gives the bride a small sum of money—two and a half annas, three and a half annas or even a rupee—and the girl then dismounts and serves rice beer to the party. As she offers each man a leaf cup, she gives him a formal salute. More drinking and singing follow and after they have taken some rice and tobacco, the five men leave for home. Before they start the girls rub haldi on their clothes, their sticks are returned, but a single stick stays behind to serve as a lonely witness to the rite.]

## B

## THE FLOWER DIALOGUE

*A: (Leader of the bride's party)*—What are you looking for brothers? Where are you coming from? Where are you going? We hear a band of robbers is about, and we would like to know whether you are thieves or travellers.

*B: (Leader of the bridegroom's party)*—No. We are not thieves. We are not robbers. We are the Kulli Rajas of Moreng and are only going on a journey. We were passing the Raja of Jurkela's palace when we noticed a most lovely flower in his garden. It has taken our fancy so much that we cannot go on unless we get it. Whatever the flower costs we are willing to pay, but we must have it. And we shall stay here till you give it to us.

*A:* Brothers, the flower you speak of was, of course, only grown for sale, and unless you can give us the proper price, we obviously cannot part with it. You can guess the care that was lavished on it, when it was young. We had to put on a special full time gardener, and only after being tended day and night has it grown to what it is. It has now blossomed after twenty years and you can guess the huge amount we have had to spend. If that sum does not give you pause, then all we can say is that you are really bold.

*B:* We have made up our minds to have that flower and if you are afraid of the cost, how can we get it? But you must not charge us unreasonably.

*A:* We shall charge you only our actual costs—nothing more. Instead of the spade and coulter which went blunt when we were turning the soil around it, give us twelve pairs of bullocks. And for the gardener who went through immense hardships to shade it from the sun, give us a turban.

*B:* We can't agree to all that, for the gardener did not tend it all day and all night and did not tend only that plant. There are other plants as well which he must have tended. We want only one flower—the flower we have set our hearts on. And the price we will give is three bullocks and a turban.

*A:* If that is all you can offer, I am afraid we shall have to keep our flower. If you really want it, you must give us nine pairs of bullocks and a turban.

*B:* Nine pairs of bullocks we can't give but we can offer you seven bullocks. Please do not ask for more.

A: Very well. It is settled. Brothers, sisters and children of the house, these people are not the thieves or robbers that we thought. They are now our guests. Wash their feet and pile their sticks in the house.

## C

## THE QUAIL DIALOGUE

A: (*Leader of the bride's party*)—What have you come for, brothers? Nowadays everyone is talking of the thieves. You don't belong to this village. We have not seen you here before. Tell us exactly what your movements are or we shall drive you out.

B: (*Leader of the bridegroom's party*)—Brothers, we belong to a distant country, but are not thieves or robbers. We are the Soreng Rajas of Semra and are out on a big hunting expedition. We came through the Semra jungles to Rampur and after seeing the forest guard and getting his permission, we started hunting in the Rampur jungles. A quail got up and we set our hawk on it. The hawk caught it but not properly and then the quail got away. It flew very fast with our hawk chasing it but although our hawk flew fast, it could not catch it. We hurried after it up to this place and found the hawk crying on a roof. We went to the house and tried to catch it, but the hawk only looked at the door and cried more loudly. We then guessed that the quail had flown inside. Meanwhile this man Budhu told us the quail had dashed for the house with a hawk after it and that afterwards, the hawk sat on the roof. We have at last caught our hawk but the quail is still in your house. Kindly bring it out.

A: Budhu, did you really tell them the quail was in our house or were you only deceiving them?

Budhu: Yes, I told them I had seen a quail but I did not know whether it was theirs or not.

A: Well, there is no point in denying it. A friend really has come to our house but whether it is yours or not is of course open to question. You will perhaps be able to say whether it is yours when you see it. But it seems that it must be yours. Come in and let us wash your feet.

## II

The origin of these dialogues is necessarily obscure, for traditions would flag if their starting points were known. It is possible, however, that if marriage by capture was the earliest form of Kharia marriage, the dialogues may have grown up when capture was yielding place to private treaty. The hunt for the deer or the quail and the pursuit of the flower might then have developed

as symbolic expressions of the same need which prompted resort to capture. We may perhaps define this need as a need for violence, and see in marriage by capture not merely a practical expedient but a form of action necessary in itself for the fructification of a marriage. The violence of the village would then be a natural parallel to the violence of the bridegroom, an aid to fertility itself.

Such a view must obviously be speculation, and I should hesitate to attribute any such conscious need to contemporary Kharias. At the present time, the dialogues serve a fairly evident function. They are the ways in which the hardness of the marriage bargain is softened. A girl cannot be taken over without indemnifying her family for the loss. The payment must be made and talks must settle the amount. But the girl is much more than the bullocks for which she is bartered and the human value must be stressed. For this reason, the girl ceases to be a girl and becomes a deer, a flower or a quail. Then and only then can the bargaining proceed with zest. The dialogues are the means by which human decencies are observed.

But it is not only as euphemisms for a bargain that the dialogues are important. In substituting a deer, a flower or a quail for the girl, the dialogues are drawing on certain traditional symbols and exposing their meaning with lucidity and force. They are acting, in fact, as transmitters of imagery. Without their aid, it might sometimes seem doubtful whether the images in a song were literal or symbolic. In the light of the dialogues, a deer or a flower can never be entirely literal. It must always, to some extent, be a girl.

The ultimate importance of these dialogues is that they are expressions of poetry—the demonstration in Kharia life of a whole poetic method.

### III

#### A SANTAL DIALOGUE

##### A

##### *The first enquiry*

A: Tell me, old man, is there a new pot in the village which might perhaps be spared?

B: There may or may not be. For whom is it wanted?

A: We want it for our eldest boy.

B: So you are Sorens? And they are Hembroms? There is very possibly a spare one.

C: Could you get it for us?

A : Yes, please enquire about it and let us see it.

C : But it must be from the house of a good potter—with a good form and burnt to a turn.

B : Do you think I would give you a bad one? I shall do all I can to show you a good pot and you yourselves can look it over.

A : How long will it take you to show it to us?

B : I shall first have to make enquiries. It is possible that someone else from another side has started enquiring after it and I will tell you when I have found out.

A : How long will you take to let us have an answer?

B : I will come in five days' time and you can go with me to see it.

C : Then, there is only one pot?

B : No, not at all. I can think of four or five pots and perhaps all of them can be spared. I will show them all to you and you can choose whichever one you like.

A : Very well. Come back in five days' time. If the pot is all right, we shall buy it at once.

## B

### *The Girl's Village*

B : Jogmanjhi, are you at home?

D : Yes. Come inside. Where are they from? Let all of them come inside and sit down.

B : They are strangers from another village.

D : Let them tell us all their news.

B : By the grace of Chando Baba, we are all well these days. And how are you?

D : By the grace of Chando Baba, we also are well.

A : We want all to be well.

D : To whose house have you come? We are feeling frightened?

A : No. There is nothing to fear. We have come for a good reason to the house of one of your men.

B : We are searching for a new pot. Please show us one.

D : Is it a new pot or a used pot that you are searching for?

A : A new pot, not an old or a used one.

B : I know of one pot in beautiful condition and we have been already to its house. If there is no other customer for it, show us this new pot first.

D: Wait while I ask them. We shall certainly see at least one pot for there are many here.

B: Do it for us quickly for we are not staying long, and have to go back.

D: I am coming as quickly as I can.

## C

*The return to the village*

B: We saw a pot and looked it over carefully. How did it strike us?

A: The pot was quite good, I would not call it a bad one.

C: What sort of pot do you want? We have to see if it is withered or crippled, and how it walks, speaks and laughs?

B: Indeed we do.

A: I quite liked what we saw of its body, face and general movement.

C: I sounded and tapped the pot. It talked and laughed very nicely. Its girlish nature was all it should be. But what are the mother and father like?

B: Both of them are good people. Do you remember a certain old man? The father is his son. And the girl's mother? She is the daughter of a certain woman in a certain village. Both of them are very good.

A: So they are those people. I also have heard that they are good. So that is who they are.

B: Yes, they are the persons.

C: Then we shall make them our relatives. The pot is good to look at, its shape is pleasant and it has a lovely ring.

A: Raebaric, we are very pleased. You showed us a good pot from a good potter.

B: Then what is one to say? It is not for one day or half a day. It is for a whole lifetime that we are getting this pot. We shall look at it and test it and if it is not good, why should we take it? If the potter is not good, can the pot be good?

A: You are speaking truly. We shall hasten to have it in our family.

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[In this, dialogue collected in Simlong, Pakaur sub-division, Santal Parganas, in 1941, A is the bridegroom's father, B is the raebaric, or match-maker, C is the boy's mother and D is the jogmanjhi or proctor in the village of the bride. The dialogue consists of a strictly traditional form and is used when the negotiations are virtually ended.]

## SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE ON BETROTHAL DIALOGUES

By VERRIER ELWIN

In addition to the dialogues already recorded here and elsewhere, I can add a few collected during recent fieldwork in central India and Orissa.

## PARDHANS OF MANDLA

The Pardhans of Mandla use the symbol of fruit, the *phaldān* or gift of fruit. When the boy's messengers come to the girl's house, they say, 'Will you throw us out or let us sit with you? Are you going to open the door or keep it shut? We have come to your feet, give us the gift of fruit, make our boy fortunate and give him a home.'

## BHUIYAS OF BONAI STATE

*The bride's parents:* 'Friends, why have you come to our village?'

*The boy's messengers:* 'We are merchants, and we hear that in a house in this village a beautiful cucumber is growing and we have come to get it.'

'Certainly there is a cucumber in our house. But who knows if it is yet ripened, or whether indeed it has rotted and fallen to the ground?'

'No, let it be as it is. We want to buy it.'

The discussion continues interminably along these lines, and altogether four visits have to be made before the betrothal is settled, for the people say, 'By travelling once, a path is not prepared: by pounding grain once, the rice is not made ready.'

## JUANGS OF PAL LAHARA

*The bride's parents:* 'Why have you come, friends, to our village?'

*The boy's messengers:* 'We are merchants travelling in search of a fine cucumber which we hear is growing in your house.'

'But merchants are rich people and we are afraid of them. Please go elsewhere.'

'We have not come to buy pots and dishes. We only seek the beautiful cucumber that is growing in your house.'

Then, if the girl's parents are willing, they agree to sell, and the boy's messengers put a stick in the girl's house saying, 'See, this stick is for our cucumber. Let the creeper cling to this and do not give it to another.'

## JUANGS OF DHENKANAL

Here they sometimes use the symbol of water. When the boy's messengers are asked why they have come, they reply, 'We are very thirsty and have come seeking for water.' If the girl's parents are not willing, they say, 'Where can we get water in this dry land? Go and search where there are good streams and rivers.' This recalls the custom of some Baigas who, when they go for a betrothal, say, 'We have come to get a gourd in which to put our water.'

## THE BASTAR TRIBES

Throughout Bastar the most common symbol for the bride is a flower. The betrothal ceremony is called in Gondi *pungar mihchna*, 'the plucking of the flower' or *pungar kurki*, 'looking at the flower.' When the boy's father, with two or three relatives, reach the girl's house they sit down in the courtyard, and presently the girl's father says, 'Have you come on any business?' They answer, 'We hear that a flower has blossomed in your house, and we have come to pluck it.' 'Why do you want to pluck it?' asks the girl's father. 'So that we may stick it in our hair.' 'Have you seen the omens on the way?' asks the girl's father. 'Yes, and they were good to us.'

I have recorded almost identical dialogues from the Kuruk and the Dhurwa where the boy's party says, 'We have heard that a flower has blossomed in your garden. We have come to pick it, and wear it in our hair.' The flower symbol is also used by the Khonds, and Russell and Hiralal give some charming sentences from the Turis. 'I hear that a sweet-scented flower has blossomed in your house and I have come to gather it.' To which the bride's father may reply, 'You may take my flower, if you will not throw it away when its sweet scent is gone.'<sup>1</sup>

There is an interesting example of a betrothal dialogue during incidents that led up to a murder in the Bison-horn Maria village of Ghatom in Bastar State. The young Siraha (magician) of Surnar, Muka, was in love with Kume, the daughter of Poyami Irma, and one day in March 1935 he went with a pot of salphi juice to ask for her in marriage. When he reached the house and Irma asked him his business, Muka said, 'I have started work in my fields and I have need of a cow. I hear you have a good cow in your shed and so I have come to buy it from you.'

'We have no cow here' said Irma, who did not understand what Muka was talking about (for the Marias normally use the

<sup>1</sup> R. V. Russell and Hiralal, *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces* (London, 1916), Vol. IV, p. 590.



flower-symbolism in their betrothal dialogues). 'I am sorry you have troubled yourself unnecessarily. You must be tired and hungry. Take some rice and dal, and cook your food and eat it.' For Muka being a Siraha could not eat from the hands of other people, but had to cook his own meals. He accepted the grain and gave Irma the salphi juice which he had brought. Irma accepted it and took it into the house to drink. But then his wife told him that Muka had not come for a real cow, but to ask for their daughter in marriage. When he heard this, Irma was furious and abused Muka saying '*Thu ri mailotia*, I don't want your salphi nor will I give you my daughter,' and he threw the juice away and turned him out of the house.

As Muka was going home, he saw Kume collecting mahua flowers in the forest. She was so beautiful that he went to her and said, 'Come away with me', and he took the basket of mahua flowers out of her hands. But the girl screamed, and some men who were working near by ran to the place and abused Muka asking him whether he was betrothed to the girl that he should take her away by force.

Two days later Muka again came to the village, and found Kume returning with another girl from the forest with a bundle of leaves. He caught her by the hand, and tried to carry her off. A neighbour saw the incident and rescued the girl. Muka hid himself in the village rest-house. Presently Kume's brother Usodi came home, and hearing what had happened went to Muka and killed him with his axe.

# THE DEWAR-BHAUJI RELATIONSHIP

By SHAMRAO HIVALE

## I

THIS article attempts to describe the relations between a man and his elder brother's wife as organized and disciplined by the Gonds and Pardhans of the hill and forest area of east Mandla. The convention, which allows great liberty to the younger brother and permits him after his elder brother's death to have access to the person and possessions of the widow, is akin to the Levirate. In India it goes back to Manu, and though more advanced societies in India have abandoned the tradition,<sup>1</sup> the aboriginals and the lower Hindu castes under their influence still maintain it.

I will use throughout this article the Hindi<sup>2</sup> words employed by the Gonds, which are more convenient than their English equivalents. Dewar means husband's younger brother; bhauiji, elder brother's wife; jeth, husband's elder brother; jethani, husband's elder brother's wife; dewarani, husband's younger brother's wife; sas or mami, mother-in-law, and sasur or mama, father-in-law. Nanand is husband's younger sister.

One day, while I was discussing the relations between dewar and bhauiji with an old woman, she exclaimed, 'The word dewar is poetry to us.' To realize the truth of this remark one has to imagine a young bride's mental picture of her new strange home! She is in awe of every member of it. No one in the house is very pleased with her, for her bride-price has meant a lot of money to the family. Everyone looks on her as an intruder. The parents think, if she is clever, she may soon split the family or she may get full control of their son. If there is a jethani, she has to see that the girl does all the hard work. Of course, she has to avoid the very shadow of her jeth. She must not be in the same room with him or even talk to him in company. The nanand is usually temperamental and you can never be sure of her behaviour. Very likely the new bride wins her affection, but it takes time before she is able to help her in her love affairs. But before that happens the nanand is not too pleased with the bhauiji who has come to possess her brother. And then what young girl would not be frightened of the strange man, her husband? He may have looked forbidding, cruel; he may have been very rough at the wedding ceremony when he removed the betel nut from her tender hands, or he may have brutally trodden on her ankles while she was going round the pole. Then who is there in

<sup>1</sup> The great Hindi novelist Premchand has used the motif in his *Bare Ghar Ki Beti*.

<sup>2</sup> In this area the Gonds do not speak Gondi, but a dialect of Hindi.

the new family to whom she can look as a supporter? There is only the dewar, her very Deo, her 'little god' in all her troubles. Perhaps she already knows him well. He is unmarried and young, if not by age, at least by his position. He is her 'half husband' and he knows she is his. He is 'the consoler of her heart' always. He 'leads her to eternity.'

How hard it is to live here !  
 My mami hits me with her fists,  
 My nanand twists my cheeks.  
 Only one there is who keeps me happy,  
 And that is my handsome young dewar.<sup>1</sup>

## II

Under such conditions, a tender and exquisite relationship rapidly develops. The husband connives at it so long as he does not catch the friends in the very act of love. There are beautiful poems sung by the Lamana gypsies who are usually away most of the time with their pack-bullocks. In one song the newly-wedded bride asks her husband how she is to spend the lonely days and nights in his absence, and he says, 'Your little dewar will amuse you.' Among the Telis, who are small merchants making a livelihood by taking their goods from one bazaar to another and thus are away for over four or five days in a week, the young dewars have to look after the wives and naturally become very intimate with them.

Usually the bhauji addresses her dewar in the most endearing manner—'Little brother', 'Brother', 'Parrot', '*Bhitraha*, or one who is always in the house,' 'Little one,' 'Naked one', 'Teaser', 'One who can read and write.' The following Baiga poems reflect Gond and Pardhan sentiment.

O my bhauji, listen, though I am inconstant,  
 I am loved by those who care to love.  
 Listen, give your ear, my bhauji, I would sleep with you.  
 How I want to love you ; clasp me to your breast.

In Srawan the rain drenches us with water.  
 My young dewar is combing my wet hair,  
 And now he spreads his hands over my young body.

Near the bed a lamp is burning.  
 Look, look, he is with his bhauji.  
 A-re-re ! A-re-re ! My dewar is enjoying me.  
 He has torn my jacket.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Verrier Elwin, *The Baiga* (London, 1939), p. 182.

<sup>2</sup> Elwin, *op.cit.*, p. 183.

Both bhauji and dewar are mentally ready for a tremendous romance. But often it is the bhauji who tries to seduce the dewar, for he is generally much the younger. There are 'as many ways of seduction as beads in a necklace.' The girl may ask sometimes for a thing that she does not want. For example, the dewar may have a comb and she says, 'O brother, give me that comb,' and he naturally refuses. Then she says, 'If you are so mean as not to give me that little comb, how will you satisfy my desires?' The bhauji may be in the river bed, gone to get water or to wash clothes, and she may say, 'O my little brother, go away. I am going to be naked, for I want to have a bath' and may begin to undo her clothes. The poor boy, if he is shy, runs away, but if he is bold he will remain. If a bhauji finds that it is difficult to seduce the dewar, then she says to him, 'Ha, when we were of your age, we used to roast gram on the grass roof.' She may continuously tease him by saying, 'O my dewar is a chhokra (a young boy), but he can never be a bakra (a goat)' or 'Alas, my dewar is a chhokra, while his elder brother is a dokra (an old man)'.

The Dewars, a caste of wandering minstrels from Chhattisgarh, like the Lamanas and Telis—and perhaps others who constantly travel about—take special pleasure in this relationship. This is one of their songs—

O the zoolum of my little dewar !  
When I go to draw water  
There he is, dancing *funnu funnu* round me,  
With my eyes I punish him  
But he takes no heed  
And as he fondles me I cry  
Hai O father ! Hai O mother !

O the zoolum of my little dewar !  
When I go to cook  
There he is, dancing *thunu thunnu* round me.  
I pelt him with sweets  
But he takes no heed  
And as he tickles me I cry  
Hai O father ! Hai O mother !

O the zoolum of my little dewar !  
When I go to sleep  
There he is, dancing *chunu chunu* on the bed  
But now I conquer him  
With my love and beauty  
And as he falls he cries  
Hai O father ! Hai O mother !

The dewar is the only person from whom the bhauji can get any sympathy. Her husband is faithless to her; he is too old; he doesn't care for her; but the quick heart of the youth is always hers.

On her part, the girl protects the dewar and looks after him very well. The poems are full of expressions like 'Do not touch him; do not beat my dewar.' 'Do not hurt him by hard words; do not make him a rag on which everyone wipes his hands, just because he is young.'

The real intimacy comes when a dewar is ill. The bhauji immediately becomes his nurse and doctor. She allows no one else to look after him. She gives him his bath, massages him, feeds him. For everyone knows that, if she is his 'half-wife,' she is also his 'half-mother'; and it is the duty of the mother to look after her child in sickness.

The Gonds have a story in which the bhauji falls madly in love with her dewar. He has an extremely beautiful body, but he is not very good-looking. Her husband is handsome, but is unsatisfying sexually. The girl goes with them to Amarkantak, to the temple of the goddess Narbada, and the two brothers go in to worship. There is a quarrel between them and they cut each other's heads off. The girl waits outside for them for a long time, and when they do not come out, she goes in and to her great horror finds them dead. She now begins to weep and ask favours of the goddess. But there is no answer and she goes out, and prepares to commit suicide by hanging herself. As soon as the goddess sees this, she says to the girl, 'O daughter, go, and your dewar and husband will be returned to you. Go and put their heads and bodies together and you will find they come to life.' The girl has to think quickly. She goes back and puts her husband's head on to the dewar's body and the dewar's head on to the husband's body, and they come to life. Now both these men realize that their bodies are not their own and they are in great distress. The girl goes with them to the village, and before the elders the whole story is told. The elders decide that the face is the only indication of a man's identity, and they tell the girl to take the man with the husband's face. In this way the girl gets her dewar's body and her husband's head.<sup>1</sup>

### III

The bhauji is usually of the greatest help in the dewar's romances. He may not be in love with his wife and he goes and tells

<sup>1</sup> This must be an aboriginal rehash of Somadeva's story of Madana-sundari in the *Katha Sarit Sagara* [V. E.]

her so ; he may have fallen in love with a girl in the village : she is his confidante. She makes it her business to excite love between them, and very soon the dewar to his great gratitude finds that his girl is even willing to leave her husband for him.

Amongst the Gonds, on the last night of the marriage, the young boys usually help the bridegroom to bring his bride from the crowd where she is sleeping. They go and pick her up and bring her to him in a private room. But among lower caste Hindus living among aboriginals—there are usually only one or two such families in a village—it is very difficult for the husband to get at his wife. In these circumstances it is the bhaui who comes to the rescue. She says to her dewarani, the newly-married bride, 'Come sister, we will sleep together,' and so takes her into a separate house. Then before the bride knows where she is, she suddenly finds her husband is near and her jethani has run away.

Whenever a bhaui runs away from the house—after a quarrel with her husband or a dispute with her parents-in-law—it is the dewar's privilege to go and fetch her back. Very often on the way he beats her for having troubled him to walk so many miles to fetch her. In Patangarh I know one boy whose bhaui often used to run away. One day he went to fetch her and after they had come some distance, he rested on a river bank and had his food. But he made her stand in the water on one leg until he had finished. Often the dewar blackmails his bhaui, finding that is a good way of seducing a girl who does not yield to his desires. The Kotwar of Patangarh, when he was young, was one day so angry with his bhaui for singing and dancing the Karma that he took a huge stick and hit her, breaking her ear-ornaments and cutting part of the ear.

Once a bhaui ran away to her mother's house after a quarrel with her husband. After some time the husband went to fetch her back, and she would not return. Then the father-in-law went and she would not return. At last the dewar was sent and seeing him the girl was very pleased and she returned. As they were on the way, they began to talk very intimately and presently there was a field of hemp and these two went into the field and lay together. The girl was very pleased with the sound of the hemp created by the movements of the dewar while he was having intercourse with her. That night she reached home and slept with her husband. As he embraced her, she missed the music of the hemp and said without thinking, 'The little brother always ties bells round his waist. Why don't you do the same ?'

#### IV

This relationship between a dewar and his bhaui is one of the so-called 'joking relationships' of anthropology. But this

behaviour is strictly regulated. For example, the dewar is not allowed to address his bhauji in the familiar terms which the husband can use. In Mandla, if a man says 'O' to a girl, it means tremendous familiarity and intimacy. Children or brothers do say 'O' to their mother or sisters, but it is always followed with the relationship, term or the name of the person. They say, 'O mother.' But a husband simply says, 'Na O' to his wife when addressing her: this is his special privilege. But the dewar is not allowed to say 'O' to his bhauji. Nor can she say 'Re' to her dewar, for this is a term of familiarity for boys used amongst only very intimate friends, or by parents or elder people while addressing younger boys. A dewar can joke with his bhauji in front of her husband. But this too is controlled. The Gonds say that, even when a tiger springs on a deer, it does so from a hidden place. And though there are many jokes that are regarded as privileged, there is a definite limit that—in the husband's presence—must be observed.

The following conversations will give some idea of what a joking relationship means. Sometimes, like Mr. Pickwick in the presence of Mr. Peter Magnus, we may feel envious of the ease with which our Gond friends are entertained.

## (a)

Dewar : O bhauji, someone has come for you.

Bhauji : Perhaps it is your sister's husband.

Dewar : If I am not your sister's husband, then whose husband am I?

Bhauji : Hush, aren't you ashamed of yourself? Haven't you got any strength in your own loins? You have your own sister as your wife in this house. Try to satisfy her.

Dewar : That is why your brother comes every few days, rushing to this house, due to your magic charms. Why do you want to torture him? He is standing outside, come out now to meet him.

Bhauji : Enough. You ought to be ashamed of talking like this.

Dewar : Why should I be ashamed of myself? Have I had my nose cut off?

Bhauji : There, there, your own wife is coming. *And then addressing her nanand, she says:* Come, come, you flirt, your husband is calling you. The poor man is burning with passion for you. Come and satisfy his heart for a moment.

*Here the bhauji catches hold of the nanand and drags her to the dewar who is, of course, her own brother, and tries to tie them together.*

Nanand : Stop, you flirt. I suppose this is how you used to behave with your own brother. That is why you are doing this to me.

*The dewar, very embarrassed or pretending to be, runs away from the place. Then the bhauji says to the nanand :*

Bhauji : There, there ! Go, he is calling you to that corner. Go and talk to him. Otherwise he may beat you.

Nanand : I know why this brother of yours is always coming to see you.

Bhauji : If I had married my own brother, why should I want to come to your house ?

Nanand : When I tease you, you become angry. But you are also teasing me.

*In this way they separate.*

The above is a typical example of the not very exciting conversations that are called privileged, and which anyone who lives in a Gond village will often overhear.

(b)

Dewar : O bhauji, your breasts are like cow-pats.

Bhauji : Perhaps, but you won't ever get to the bottom of them.

Dewar : Will I have to push a bamboo in ?

Bhauji : I will let you know when your sister comes. Within a few days of her arrival you will become thin as a bamboo.

Dewar : Very well. But first go and bring your own sister for me, and see if she can reduce me to such weakness.

Bhauji : You impotent fellow. I do hope one day you will get a black bitch as your wife, and then you will be happy.

Dewar : I will see when the time comes. But don't worry about me. O bhauji, why did your brother come last night when my brother was away ? I suppose you are trying to separate him from his wife and children and bring him here to live with us.



Bhauji: This creature with privates diseased and rotting is now trying to pose as a stud bull. We must really get him a wife to keep him in order.

The humour, it will be noticed, is very different from what is found in Europe, where prostitution, perversion and adultery are the main themes of abuse and risky jokes. Here incest, especially the unheard-of brother-sister incest, is the central motif.

## V

The dewar who does not take advantage of his position is greatly admired. The central legend of the Murias is about Lingo, their cult hero. He rose to this eminence by resisting the seductions of his six beautiful bhaujis. He was the youngest of seven brothers and all the six bhaujis tried their best to win his affection, but he took no notice. Ultimately they tried to revenge on him by telling lies about him to their husbands who burnt him alive, and yet he was brought to life. He was buried alive but miraculously saved. At last he left the six brothers and established the Muria Ghotul-dormitory.

Akin to this is a story I heard in Patangarh. The youngest of seven brothers is hard put to it to resist the wiles of his six bhaujis. But he takes no notice. His six brothers are very fond of him and will not allow their wives to make him do any work. But they torture him every minute of his life, until he leaves his house and goes away to a city where he becomes a great merchant.

There are cases where the bhauji looks upon her little dewar as if he was her younger brother or son, and the dewar responds in a like spirit. The relationship is then very charming, tender and intimate yet free from the least suspicion of scandal.

## VI

How does the husband regard this relationship? He too is governed by conventions. He should never take any notice of scandal, unless he sees his young brother and his wife actually together—this helps a great deal in preserving peace in the families. But some brothers are so generous that, even if they see certain things, they connive at them. There was a good example of this in a neighbouring village. An absent husband returned unexpectedly at midnight and when he opened the door of his house, he found his younger brother and his wife sleeping together 'with their legs tucked into each other.' For a moment he felt like murder. But he quietly closed the door, went to the headman's house and called the elders. He said to them, 'Go and see it for yourselves. I will surely kill them both, but

I want your advice first.' The boy and the woman were beaten by the elders and other members of the family, and peace was made. Now they still live together and there are no quarrels at all.

But in spite of possible jealousy, a wise husband learns how to use his younger brother. He tells him to keep a watch on his wife's movements. The dewar, usually more jealous of the bhaui than the husband himself is always watching her, where she stands, what she does, with whom she talks. And if he finds her flirting with anyone, he rebukes her in very coarse language, and if it has no effect he threatens to report the matter to her husband. Very often he does report scandal and gets the poor bhaui into great trouble.

The relationship naturally does not escape the voice of scandal, as is shown by the following proverbs :

A simpleton's wife is everybody's bhaui.

When a bhaui is alone in the house, she becomes a chhokri, a little girl.

When the husband goes to a bazaar, at home the bhaui has a hazaar (a thousand lovers).

## VII

The real test of the dewar-bhaui relationship comes after the death of the elder brother. If the bhaui is young and beautiful, the dewar is very eager to marry her. But if she is old and with several children, then it is a great responsibility for him. However, the widow has to be protected and the children cared for.

At the time when the elders feast at the Kiria Karam, on the tenth day after a death, they say to the dewar, 'This is your house. You are to repair it. Care for the children. Let no harm come to them. Do not abuse or beat them. They are small and helpless. Make a home for them. Don't let the name of this house fail'. Then they say to the woman, 'Formerly you thought of this man as your son; now he is your lord. Go according to his order and serve him. As you cared for your first lord, so care now for this. As you obeyed that, so obey this'. Then if they agree to marry, on the fixed day, when food is eaten, they sprinkle haldi and water on the widow and put new bangles on her and begin to live in whichever house suits them.

But if the woman refuses to marry her dewar, he can demand compensation from the man she marries afterwards. Among the Gadabas, if a widow does not marry a younger brother, the second husband has to pay him the *rand tonka*, as it is called in Oriya,<sup>1</sup> and similar customs exist in many other tribes.

<sup>1</sup> E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), Vol. II, p. 249.

In Patangarh there are two very old women, wives of two brothers. The elder died some years ago. His widow is about seventy years old. Her dewar, aged about sixty-five, is blind. But when the elders asked the old man to marry and keep the woman in his house, he refused on the ground that he had always looked upon her as a mother, and the poor old woman was very hurt. When I talked to her about it, she said, 'If he could not keep me in his house, he could at least give me one sari a year'. In another village a man married his bhauji and kept her for nearly fifteen years. But then he fell in love with another woman and left her. The old woman was in agony. One day when she was expressing her feelings to her youngest dewar, she said, 'I may be old, but that part of my body is not old', and he laughingly replied, 'Then why don't you marry his horse?'

In some cases the marriages between a widowed bhauji and the dewar are unsuccessful. They desire to separate, but then the problem of property arises. Many such cases are brought before the panchayat at Patangarh, and I will give a few examples.

The Pardhan Kotwar of Jhanki married his elder brother's widow, just because the elder brother had left fifty cattle. He went to the widow's house taking with him sweets and clothes and was very nice to her, and made many promises. She came to him with all her cattle. Within a month his wife began to quarrel. The poor widow was given no food. She had to work hard, and at last she wanted to run away. But he would not let her go. The panchayat restored to her half her property and allowed her to go and live separately.

Another man, this time a Gond, did the same thing. After taking all his widowed bhauji's property, his elder wife began to trouble her. So he said to the bhauji, 'Don't leave me. But live separate and adopt my son'. He returned the property to the widow. For the widow was old and there was no likelihood of her marrying again. Thus his own son got the property and he was quite satisfied.

Another case occurred at Sunpuri. A young Gond took as his wife his bhauji, an elderly widow who was well off with three houses. But they never lived happily and after a while she left him and went away. When she returned some time afterwards, she found to her surprise that all her three houses had been dismantled and the youth had built new houses with the material. The panchayat made him restore to her all her things, and now she lives alone.

In Sanhrwachhappar, a young Ahir died leaving his pregnant widow behind. Her dewar did not want to marry her, as he was very fond of his own wife. But his parents forced him to take her.

After a little while she went home and her parents married her to another man. The new husband was made to pay compensation to the dewar.

A man married his elder son to a girl and he died. She was then married to her dewar. He also died. The father tried to marry her to his youngest son. But she refused for, she said, her mother-in-law accused her of swallowing all her sons. So she married another man and they refused to pay for her on the ground that she had been driven out by the mother-in-law.

When a Gond died, his mother and sister accused the widow of being a Churelin and killing him. They would not give her food. She told all this to her father who took her away before her bangles were broken. There was a little boy who was technically her dewar and they wanted her to marry him so that she could be kept in the house to work. But this she refused. The father of the girl paid seventy rupees in compensation.

### VIII

In the folk-tales of the world the youngest brother's position is always one of great privilege. He is the hero, tested, troubled, but rewarded in the end. Here we get this fairy-tale situation in real life. What are the reasons which lead tribal society to allow the younger brother such privileges?

(1) The first reason is the very natural love of the youngest son. Usually he is alone in the house with his old parents and the new bhauji, and everybody feels kind and generous. He excites the protective and maternal instinct in all the older women.

(2) The second reason is economic. The widow has to be protected and this convention helps to avoid any dispute about inheritance. To get the bhauji's property, very young boys have married elderly women.

(3) The third reason is that there is a sentiment about it. The Gonds say, 'Keep the girl in the family'. She has been worshipping their clan-god. She has lived with them for years. Marriage among these people is not a mere union of individuals, but an alliance of families. Even among the Hindus the widow does not leave her husband's family and return to her parents' house. She looks after the house and dies there. The dewar-bhauji union is a logical sequence to widow-remarriage.

So important is this relationship in primitive thought and sentiment that without a proper understanding of it, the songs and stories, the domestic disturbances, even the crimes of aboriginal India cannot be properly appreciated.

# AVENUES TO MARRIAGE AMONG THE BONDOS OF ORISSA

By CHRISTOPH VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

THE Bondos or Bondo Porajas, as they are called in the older literature, are one of the aboriginal races inhabiting the hill ranges north-west of the Machkund River in the Koraput District of Orissa. They speak an Austro-Asiatic language and although they are but a small people<sup>1</sup> there are few primitive tribes in Peninsular India whose cultural life has been so little influenced by the civilizations of more progressive races. Seclusion in highlands even to-day accessible only by footpaths, and an innate conservatism seem to be responsible for the persistence of a culture representing no doubt one of the last remnants of the Austro-Asiatic civilization which in neolithic times extended from Further India deep into the Indian Peninsula. In a recent article<sup>2</sup> I have pointed out that the megalithic ritual of the Bondos belongs in form and spirit to the same megalithic complex that prevails among the hill tribes of Assam and it is not without interest that in the social life of the Bondos too we find an atmosphere reminiscent of conditions among the Nagas and other hill tribes of North-eastern India.

The object of the present article, however, is not to trace cultural affinities, but to record certain aspects of the social life of a tribe hitherto almost completely neglected by anthropologists. No part of a culture requires a more prolonged and intimate study than a people's behaviour in regard to sex and marriage and my stay among the Bondos was too short to allow me to penetrate beyond the façade of accepted custom. But even accepted custom, however often at variance with actual practice, expresses the Bondos' fundamental attitude to marriage and gives us at least a glimpse into the spirit of their social life.

The Bondos, cultivators of oft shifted hill-fields and irrigated rice terraces, live in villages perched on hill tops or clinging to the gentle slopes of upland valleys. Each village with its sub-settlements forms an exogamous unit. Although the Bondos are divided into phratries (*bonso*), each bearing the name of an animal such as tiger or cobra, and into numerous clans (*kuda*), the village is the only unit decisive in the regulation of marriage relationships. Marriage within the clan, while not frequent, is permissible, and the rules of phratry exogamy are violated with impunity, but

<sup>1</sup> In the Census of 1941, 2,565 Bondos were recorded.

<sup>2</sup> *Megalithic Ritual among the Gadabas and Bondos of Orissa*, J. R. A. S. Bengal, Vol IX, 1943. This article contains also a brief outline of the Bondos' general culture.

sex-relations between members of the same village, 'men and women who partake of the same sacrificial food (*tsoru*)', is considered a most heinous offence.<sup>1</sup> Equally impermissible is the marriage between the children of two sisters and the union of brothers' children.

The young men and girls of a village have therefore to look to the youth of neighbouring villages for marriage-partners, and opportunities for regular contact between the young people of the tribe are afforded by the institution of girls' dormitories. Every Bondo village contains at least one dormitory for boys (*ngersin*) and one dormitory for girls (*selani dingo*). The boys' dormitory is either a separate hut, inconspicuous and rather smaller than an ordinary dwelling-house or an annex to the house of the headman, village-priest or any other elder. The unmarried boys who are not permitted to spend the night under their parents' roof, sleep in the *ngersin*, and it is here that they gather for gossip and discussions of common enterprises, when in bad weather the stone circles, their usual meeting places, become uncomfortable.

The *selani dingo*, which not only serve as dormitories for the unmarried girls, but are important centres of social life, are of two distinct types: ordinary small houses or sheds attached to dwelling houses, and underground shelters, dug some ten feet deep into the ground and roofed over with branches, bamboos and pounded earth. In constructing these shelters the girls are helped by boys of their own village, who may, however, never enter the buildings once the work is finished. Nowadays the dug-in type of dormitory seems to have largely fallen into disuse and houses above the ground are more frequent.

From the age of eight or nine the young unmarried girls go to sleep in their dormitories, where they receive the boys of other villages when they come visiting. The favourite time for these visits are the monsoon months when cold winds sweep the bare heights of the Bondo country and the *selani dingo*, crowded with cheerful young people and warmed by its comfortable glow of fires, is a cosy corner in a damp and chilly world. Under palm-leaf umbrellas and wrapped in fibre rain-coats boys walk many miles through the dark and the rain to visit their girl-friends of neighbouring villages. Often the girls will have food or drink ready to entertain their guests and the boys will bring them tobacco and small presents such as bamboo combs and plaited grass or palmyra hairbands. Nor do they forget to pay attention to

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<sup>1</sup> The only exception to the law of village-exogamy of which I heard was in the village of Bondopara; this village contains a body of immigrants who have never been fully accepted into the community and who for all ritual purposes compose a separate unit and may consequently intermarry with the other villagers.

the old widow who lives with the girls in the *selani dingo* and who sees that the young people observe the rules of dormitory etiquette and learn the traditional songs. Most evenings are spent in song and games but the boys are also free to flirt with the girls. True, Bondo dormitories are different from the *ghotul* of the Muria of Bastar; there is no formal provision for regular sexual intercourse between boys and girls, no permanent pairing off or enforced exchange of partners. The admitted purpose is rather to give the young people of different villages a chance of getting to know each other and finding through play and superficial flirtation their partners for married life. The most popular entertainment in the *selani dingo* are alternative songs, and during these two boys sit opposite two girls and sing in turn short little verses, usually traditional, but sometimes made up on the spur of the moment, to melodious, extremely pleasant tunes. In these songs the boys address the girls as 'my star, my bulbul, my golden cassia,' and press them to accept gifts which their admirers offer. In a group of boys there are usually one or two whose courtship is serious, while the others accompany them for the fun of singing and flirting with the girls. When a boy believes that his proposal is likely to be accepted he brings a bangle and one of his friends takes the girl's hand and, grasping the girl's middle finger with his second and third finger, holds the bangle between thumb and second finger. If the girl takes the bangle and puts it on her arm, she agrees to become the donor's wife. Such an engagement involves, however, no definite obligations and a girl who has already accepted one man's bangle may still change her mind and marry another boy. A favourite game of the girls and boys is the testing of each other's affection and courage by lighting the dry leaves of *Bauhinia vahlii* and burning each other's skin; the longer a boy stands the pain without crying out, the greater is deemed his affection for the girl inflicting the burns. Sometimes the boys play on flutes and the girls on Jew's harps, but drums are never played inside the *selani dingo*.

Usually the boys stay with their girl-friends till cock's crow and although there is the fiction that the young people sing and play the whole night through they often drop off to sleep and when the fire burns down there is a good deal of love-making. The Bondos believe that occasional intercourse in the girls' dormitory does not lead to pregnancy; 'only if a boy and girl live together for a year or two will they have children.'

But even pregnancy resulting from adventures in the *selani dingo* is no very great misfortune; most likely the girl's lover will marry her, but if he does not neither he nor the girl will draw upon themselves a fine or any other unpleasantness. It is said that in such a case the girl has no difficulty in finding someone

else willing to marry her and accept the child as his own. In neither event are the wedding ceremonies hurried, for there is no objection to the child being born in the house of the girl's parents.

The girls are entirely free in the choice of their marriage partners, and parents often do not know of their intentions until informed of the engagement as a *fait accompli*. It is only then that their task begins and that they have to arrange for the ceremonies preceding the wedding and to negotiate the bride-price.

When in the autumn the season of visits to the *selani dingo* comes to an end, an engaged girl goes together with one of her girl-friends to her future husband's village and for three days they both stay in the house of his parents and are afterwards sent home with gifts of rice. After some months, usually in Magh (January-February), the girl once more visits her future parents-in-law, but this time she is accompanied by several boys of her own village bringing gifts of cooked rice. The marriage may follow that same month, but it may also be postponed for a full year and in that case her fiancé resumes his visits to her dormitory during the next rains. In the following Magh the boy's parents go with several old men and women to the bride's village carrying with them cooked food and beer. This food is eaten by the bride's relations, who in turn entertain the guests. In the evening the bride is taken to the bridegroom's village and henceforth is considered his wife. A few weeks afterwards relatives of the husband take the bride-price to the girl's parents : usually it consists of two cows and one rupee.

Rich people, on the other hand, celebrate elaborate wedding feasts, and the most noteworthy feature of these is the slaughter of a buffalo in a manner elsewhere connected with feasts of merit. Some time before the wedding the bridegroom's mother's brothers take a buffalo to all the villages where his father's sisters or own sisters live, and these women feed the buffalo with ceremonial food. On the day of the wedding, when the bride has been brought to the bridegroom's village, men, women, boys and girls dance round the buffalo and decorate it with turmeric, flowers and a new cloth. Finally at a given sign all the men rush at the buffalo and with knives and axes hack it into pieces, each grabbing as much as he can of flesh and entrails. That day a feast is held and next day some of the remaining meat is taken to the bride's relations, for these were not allowed to attend the feast in the groom's village.

A marriage with full rites (*sebung*) is expensive and many men find it expedient to stage a marriage by capture (*guboi*). The capture is usually a mere pretence, for a Bondo girl cannot easily



be married against her will and even if taken by force to the captor's village she will run away at the first opportunity unless she likes him and he has won her consent. However, even a marriage by capture must be followed up by the payment of the usual bride-price.

A strange phenomenon is the Bondo women's predilection for boys many years their juniors. In every village you can see fully grown girls with husbands hardly more than eleven or twelve years old and the Bondos are emphatic that the girls themselves have chosen these partners. I was assured again and again that such uneven matches were of the girl's own making, and older women told me that they like marrying small boys: 'for then we have young husbands to work for us when we are old.' This is probably only half the truth and a stronger motive may be the girls' desire to prolong the happy days in the dormitory. For young wives of immature boys continue to sleep in the *selani dingo*, and there they no doubt find compensation for the lack of marital bliss. Not all young men, however, are eager to intrigue with other boys' wives, for if such an affair becomes serious the young husband's relations are likely to demand compensation.

Bondo marriages are easily dissolved, and young divorcees as well as widows are approached by would-be suitors in the same way as young girls. For they enter once more the girls' dormitory and play and sing with the visiting boys. Even young married women sleep in the *selani dingo* during any prolonged absence of their husbands and may join in the games though not in the love-making. Married men too may go to a girls' dormitory and court a girl if they are intent on marrying a second wife. A disillusioned husband, who after his first wife's death had married two others and soon divorced both, told me that he was fond of singing and therefore enjoyed going to the *selani dingo*; so he got saddled with two wives who did not really suit him.

To the Bondo who must find his mates in other villages, the friendships made in the *selani dingo* are the only conceivable avenue to marriage and any breakdown of the dormitory system would be tantamount to a revolution of his social life; indeed it is probable that in the place of mutual attraction, family interests and considerations of wealth would become the decisive factors in the conclusion of marriages.

## BHUMIYA MARRIAGES

By L. N. SAHU

AMONG the Bhumiyas of the Koraput District of Orissa early marriage is rare. Marriage by capture and marriage by asking occur. The Disari is the most powerful man in the selection of the bride. Everything depends on him. The first function is called Dwara Mandini, that is, going to the house of the bride for the first time. The parents or guardians of the bridegroom go to the bride's house. The second function is when the parents of the bridegroom go a second time with other villagers with chura and liquor to the bride's house. This is called Kanya Magani or formally asking for the bride. This Kanya Magani is also called Katha Chhidini, that is, 'final word giving'. After a feast they disperse. The third function is the real marriage day. The parents of the bride are given a feast; it includes some chura, rice, a goat and two cloths. The bridegroom with his party go to the bride's place with these things and the bride's father shows them to the villagers and a feast follows. Then the bride and the bridegroom are sent back with much ado, dancing and music. At the bridegroom's place, a shed is made where the bride and the bridegroom are made to sit and the Dhangoras and Dhangoris of the village dance together hand in hand. The Disari acts as the priest in the marriage. He invokes the assistance of eight Digpales and throws eight tamarind seeds to the wind. Then the bride's and bridegroom's parties pelt tamarind seed at one another with much gaiety. At night there is a feast. This is called Boda Bhoji or good feast, and all who join the marriage, bring with them some rice, vegetables, fowls or goats. The next day is called Kada Handi day. All go to a stream and bathe well. While returning from the stream, the bridegroom throws arrows at the bride seven times. The bride takes out the arrows. Then the tika ceremony takes place. Every man and woman places a grain or two in the two pots placed before the couple in the shed. Female relations dress the bride with their gifts of ornaments. The father of the bridegroom observes who has paid how much and accordingly he redistributes the gifts to the donors in the shape of cloth. The final feast is called Sana Bhoju or small feast when the parties disperse.

Generally Bhumiyas live in a joint family. Sometimes their number becomes 50 to 60 in one family. Bhumiyas have polygamy among them. It is rather common to find a Bhumiya having 3 or 4 wives.

The Uduliya, or marriage by force, means that the couple elope at night. Next day the whole village gets to know of it.

This Uduliya leads many Bhumiya into litigation. If the parents agree in the matter, then the girl lives with the man, and a marriage ceremony may take place after a year.

A Sogortha marriage occurs when a married woman leaves the former husband for some reason or other; the second husband must pay compensation to the former. Of course, the panchayat discusses the whole matter. The woman is put questions and she defends herself as best she can. This Sogortha lands the Bhumiya into great difficulties. The moneylender comes in here and ruins the Bhumiya.

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### THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLECTING PROVERBS.

IN his Huxley Memorial Lecture of 1936 Westermarck commended to the attention of anthropologists the proverbs of the people that they study. 'By collecting and studying about two thousand Moorish proverbs,' he says, 'I have become convinced of the sociological importance of such a study from several points of view. The proverbs of a people are valuable documents concerning its character and temperament, opinions and feelings, manners and customs. It is true that many of them are in all probability not indigenous. But a foreign proverb is scarcely adopted by a people unless it is in some measure congenial to its mind and mode of life; it is apt to be modified so as to fit in with its new surroundings; when sufficiently deeply rooted, it may in turn influence the native habits of thought and feeling; and if it does not succeed in being acclimatised in its adopted country, it will wither and die. These facts are important on account of the frequent difficulty, or impossibility, of distinguishing indigenous proverbs from others which have crept in from abroad. A very similar answer may be given to the objection that proverbs are not creations of a group of people but of individuals.

'But proverbs are not only reflections of life: they also play an active part in it. This functional aspect should engage our attention not only because the study of it helps us to understand their intrinsic meaning and bearing on national characteristics, but for its own sake as well. I cannot strongly enough insist on the necessity of carefully recording concrete situations in which proverbs are used, unless the collector has made sure that they have no other meaning but that which they directly express. These situations give us an insight into the use that people make of their proverbs—teach us when and how and why they use them. Most proverbs are expressions of feelings or opinions, or are intended to influence people's wills and actions.'

## REVIEWS

VERRIER ELWIN, *The Agaria*, With a Foreword by SARAT CHANDRA ROY.  
(Oxford University Press, 1942), Rs. 12-8.

IN NINE CHAPTERS—I. The Agaria (pp. 1-18), II. The Asura (pp. 19-28), III. Gazetteer (pp. 29-57), IV. Organization (pp. 59-85), V. Myth (pp. 86-129), VI. Magic (pp. 130-168), VII. Craft (pp. 169-209), VIII. Getting and spending (pp. 222-38), IX. Decay (pp. 239-71)—Mr. Elwin has produced an accurate, instructive and readable account of the Agaria black-smiths and iron-smelters of the Central Provinces of India, a small and scattered people living in the Maikal Hills and in the estates of Bilaspur. The four appendixes give details about the distribution of the Agaria according to the Census of India, about the Central Provinces iron-smelting furnaces and a chemical analysis of Agaria ore, with a useful bibliography.

As in his previous book *The Baiga*, Mr. Elwin has shed the light of sympathy and science on a mass of anthropological and ethnographic facts which had previously been little more than curiosities. Elwin's concluding remarks about the Agaria's tribal neurosis are characteristic: "Every furnace abandoned means one less temple to Lohasur; wherever charcoal-burning is forbidden, there is less honour done to Koelasur. No longer is the Virgin Fire kindled, no more is the Virgin Iron extracted in villages where the smelters have been driven from their ancestral occupations to agriculture." (pp. 269-70). It breeds a sad impulse that certain races are in process of rapid elimination; their scientific lesson must be read now or never. Systematic ethnographic investigations like the present book are urgently needed to study fleeting customs of the primitive races of India, as E. H. Man and M. V. Portman did for the natives of the Andaman Islands, as A. C. Hadden did at the Torres Straits, as Baldwin Spencer and Gillen did in Australia, as Government officials and others are doing for the American aboriginal population. Perhaps another impulse to careful anthropological study comes from the insistent importance of criminology. The practical interest of criminological enquiry reacts on the science of anthropology from which it had its origin. Elwin's reference to the Agaria carrying off a number of fish-plates from the railway storeyard at Pendra Road (p. 15) may be seen in one way by the ethnographist-criminologist who knows the Agaria's fascination for iron and fire and coal (p. 15), in another by the administrator like Colonel Ward who wrote in 1867 that the Agaria are 'the laziest and most drunken of all the Gonds'. As a matter of fact the Agaria are not Gonds, not lazy and not nearly so drunk as the Gonds (pp. 11, 13).

In the first two chapters, Elwin has discussed the origin of the Agaria. According to him, the Agaria and Asur are descendants of a tribe which is represented by the Asura of Sanskrit legend (p. 12). The term Asura in Sanskrit connotes so many attributes in the course of accretion and elimination during at least five millennia, that in spite of Elwin's commendable collection of references in Sanskrit literature, the ascription must remain at most a long-standing tradition. In the description of the Agaria septs more precision is possible, and here Mr. Elwin's trained powers of observation have traced specialised heterogeneity out of inchoate homogeneity. As against Russell and others' description of the Agaria as an offshoot of the Gonds, Mr. Elwin notes—"The Agaria have the same customs and beliefs as the Gond, often the same septs. But this would be equally true of the Korwa among whom many of the Bilaspur Agaria have their homes, while in Chota Nagpur the Agaria Asur share custom, religion and totems with other Munda tribes (p. 11)." As late as 1921, Roughton described the Agaria as a 'small Dravidian tribe which is an offshoot of the Gonds' (p. 10). Ball on the other hand says that in Palamau, 'the Agarias are

considered by the best authorities to belong to the Munda family of aboriginals.' Mr. Elwin suggests that 'possibly the Asur Agaria once invaded the Munda country in Bihar and were driven back, and thence spread west and north through Surguja, Udaipur, Korea, north Bilaspur and Raipur to the Maikal Hills with its copious supply of iron. Iron-smelting as an ancient Indian industry is borne out by literary references from the Vedas to Herodotus (*The Agaria*, pp. 24 ff.) and by the stratifications in the Indus and Narmada valleys excavations exposing iron objects. In the third chapter, Mr. Elwin discusses the distribution of the Agaria district by district and state by state.

Mr. Elwin refers on p. 73 to Logundi Raja's wife—'she gave birth to twins, a brother and sister; these married and had five sons' (*The Agaria*, Chap. IV, Organization). The mythologies of the origin of mankind seem strangely akin. They appear fertile *inter se*, but precise data on this subject are within a comparatively narrow range. They shade off into one another most perplexingly when identification or definition is the object. There are no certain cases comparable to mules among mankind. It is therefore necessary to utilise mental as well as bodily distinctions correctly to characterise these aboriginal tribes. Their usefulness depends on the discrimination of the enquirer, and Mr. Elwin shows himself to be an ideal enquirer specially in Chapters V and VI on Myth and Magic. He draws his conclusions and illustrates his remarks by apt renderings of apposite folk-lore of the Mandla legend, pp. 103-4. Only within recent years, the advance of anthropology has involved a new appreciation of folk-lore. What was formerly regarded as the somewhat mysterious romance of young peoples is now part of the anthropologist's data. Indeed some taunt that anthropology is founded on romance. They refer to the folk-lore about the fairies. But there are fairies and fairies. There are divinities associated with rivers and lakes, and there are dead ancestors (Cf. *The Agaria*, Jwala Mukhi and Raipur myths, pp. 103-4, 110 ff.). Fraser, Sidney Hartland, Mr. and Mrs. Gomme and Professor Groos left a blazing trail and Elwin has worthily followed in their steps.

To linguistics and folk-lore as essentials of Ethnography, Elwin has justly added Craft in Chapter VII, one of the most interesting in the book. Increasing attention should be paid to the anthropological value of the decorative arts as well as domestic and community crafts. The works of Grosse, H. Balfour and Hirn have demonstrated how in many cases there is a 'Racial style' as persistent as a physical feature, recognisable through periods of thousands of years. Elwin's illustrations confirm this finding. The series of striking representations of figures and cult-objects in stone and wood of primitives in Chota Nagpur where Dravidians and Mundas (Kolarians) have met and mingled—in the possession of Mr. Archer who has written on Dravidian and Kolarian—Uraon and Munda-poetry would be an invaluable help to the study of aboriginal ethnology.

It was Byron who divided Society into 'two mighty tribes—the Bores and the Bored' and it has been found that the most deadly bores who inflict the most anguish on the bored are the experts who produce moonbeams out of cucumbers. Mr. Elwin as an expert has completely belied this estimate. His work is an arresting story of how the Agaria live in their congenial Maikal home, what clothes they wear, what omens they read, what games they play, what songs they sing; how they court, marry and 'keep house'; how much they know and what they think about science and religion; what curious customs and strange superstitions they believe in; how they are governed, what they raise out of their farms, what they manufacture and how they carry on their business. As a get-away from the perfervid procession of kings, dynasties, armies and nations, Mr. Elwin's tale of

the common man, the *Agaria* will remain a source of abiding interest and pleasure.

A. BANERJI-SASTRI

J. LAYARD, *Stone Men of Malekula* (Chatto and Windus, London, 1942), £ 2-10-0.

THIS great work is dedicated to the memory of W. H. R. Rivers who once told the author that he would like to have inscribed on his tombstone the words 'He made ethnology a science.' It was indeed due to Rivers that the book was ever written at all, for Mr. Layard went with him to the meeting of the British Association in Australia in the summer of 1914, and was invited by Rivers to go with him on a further expedition. At that time great interest was being aroused by theories of megalithic migration into the Pacific, and one of the chief centres of this megalithic culture was the group of small coral islets called the Small Islands. Rivers, however, only stayed there for about a week and then went on to Tangoa Island leaving Mr. Layard behind on Atchin. It was on this island that most of Mr. Layard's work was done, and he hints that there are several volumes in preparation which will give us the fruit of his investigations there. The most northerly island of the group is called Vao, and here Mr. Layard found an earlier form of kinship structure and evidence of a northward movement of culture. This first volume, therefore, deals with life on Vao in order to supply a firm historical basis for the accounts of more recent developments of megalithic culture that will be given later.

The people of Vao do not number more than 450. They have a language of their own and a highly complicated 'class system' of kinship. Cannibalism, human sacrifice and warfare are organized on strictly ritual lines. The most important of their ritual cycles lasts no less than fifteen years, and revolves round the twin concepts of rebirth and the resulting life after death.

The book, which is over 800 pages, is a masterpiece of publishing, though some may find it heavy and unwieldy. Mr. Layard has long been known for his skill in diagrammatic illustration, and he has turned this to the fullest use in the present book. Unfortunately, there are very few half-tone illustrations, probably owing to the difficulty of obtaining art-paper in war time. It would be hard to praise sufficiently either the publisher's enterprise in producing at such a time a book of such length and complexity, or Mr. Layard's patience and skill in elucidating so fully and so scientifically a culture that was bound to remain otherwise obscure. As a student of Jung, Mr. Layard is able to throw much light on the psychological basis of the rites he describes. As a pupil of Haddon, he is equally adept in the field of sociology. *Stone Men of Malekula* will take an immediate place among the classics of anthropology.

RUTH BENEDICT, *Race and Racism* (Routledge, London, 1942), 7/6.

'I AM convinced', said a French pro-Aryan, Vacher de Lapouge, sixty years ago, 'that in the next century millions will cut each other's throats because of one or two degrees more or less of cephalic index', and it has been said in India that you can always tell a man's social status by the length or breadth of his nose. Ruth Benedict, one of the best known of American anthropologists, has in this little book examined with scientific ruthlessness the theories of race which have recently become such an important factor in national and international affairs. The book is a small one of only

175 pages and is popularly written. But Dr. Benedict finds room to give an outline of the most recent research on the races of mankind before she proceeds to a sweeping refutation of the scientific validity of the claims of those who would base any kind of racial superiority on this research. The book is probably intended in the first place to refute the race theories of the Nazis, but it is equally appropriate to any who still consider the so-called civilized Englishmen superior to Indians or the so-called civilized Indians to aboriginals. An attractive feature of the book is the large number of quotations from authoritative writers and the resolutions passed by learned societies. The book is timely and important, for as the author writes, 'Racism is an *ism* to which everyone in the world to-day is exposed ; for or against, we must take sides, and the history of the future will differ according to the decision which we make.'

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The figure printed as frontispiece was drawn by R. D. Motafram from a rubbing made by Verrier Elwin in Keonjhar State on December 3rd 1942.







ANCIENT SCENE OF MERIAH SACRIFICE AT GOOMSUR, KHONDISTAN.  
(From J. CAMPBELL, "A Personal Narrative of Thirteen Years Service in 1861.")

# MAN IN INDIA

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## COMMENT

IN THIS number, we present two surveys of murder in two important but widely separated areas. The first relates to the fastnesses of Bastar where administration is still capable of a sensitive elasticity while the second concerns one of the largest districts in Bihar. But although the areas are distinct and their traditions are different, their problems of tribal crime are remarkably alike. The understanding of a Maria murder depends on a perception of much the same essentials as the understanding of a Santal murder. Each involves a knowledge of tribal values, of the situations which lead most readily to impulsive action, of the exact engines of provocation. Each may even require for its proper elucidation a knowledge of the whole range of tribal life. Recently in the Santal Parganas, three Santals killed a man because he went on singing certain songs. In Bastar, a man asked his wife for tobacco. She refused and he killed her. In the one case, only an awareness of the poetry and its implications, in the other, only a knowledge of the symbol could really lay bare the foundations of the murders and why they really happened. In such circumstances decisions without anthropology may only too possibly be decisions without justice.

Certain characteristics of tribal crime will be evident. One of them is that there is scarcely ever any professional murder. Murders that happen do so because of fatigue and exasperation, or from forms of sudden or delayed provocation. But the hired murderer, the paid killer does not exist. In a solitary Uraon case where murder was done for hire, the paid killer was a Rautia and the person who hired him was

a Christian Uraon. The lack of nerve which prevented this Uraon from himself committing the murder prevented him also from standing by his agent; and during the investigation he explained everything to the police, he was tendered a pardon and the Rautia was hanged on his evidence. I know of no Uraon who himself took money for killing and there are no Maria or Santal instances.

The most tragic form of aboriginal murder is the murder that arises from witch-craft. This is almost the only type in which there is a will to murder and it is a type which only a complete revolution in tribal beliefs could prevent. Once a series of illnesses or deaths has occurred in an aboriginal family, the family feels itself to be doomed. If it does not eradicate the cause, the deaths will go on. If it tries to eradicate it, murder is often the only way. In a Kharia murder in which under the law I had to send the Kharia to the Sessions, a person in the village was diagnosed as a witch. He was implored to do the necessary ritual for neutralising his evil power. He kept on putting the ritual off. Finally in complete despair and seeing no other remedy, the Kharia killed him. Only a failure of diagnosis by the Soka or witch-finder, a readier acceptance of the diagnosis by the witch himself or a stronger compulsion on him by the village community could have averted this murder. In cases such as this both the murdered and the murderer are victims of a situation. The murder is implicit in the whole structure of society.

Finally there is the apparent irrelevance of punishment. In the Santal Parganas, only one Santal was hanged. In Bastar, only eighteen Marias were executed. But even if many more had gone to the scaffold, it is doubtful if the number of murders would have been fewer. The surveys make it clear that in almost all cases, the origins of the murders were beyond the reach of prudence. Similarly, in many

cases the award of transportation, ten years or five years imprisonment seems often to have hinged only on the difference between a lathi and an axe. In the one case, the courts have held that death was almost certain to result, in the other, that it might possibly not. But in many tribal murders whether the instrument is blunt or sharp is an accident and the deaths result less from the weapon than from the impulse or the frenzy. The sorting of these situations into categories of five, ten or fifteen years satisfies a sense of legal nicety but to aboriginal society it must often have an air of strangeness and bewildering caprice. How far such sentences have any deterrent effect and whether from the nature of aboriginal murders deterrence is even possible must seem open to doubt. Possibly for many years to come, terms of imprisonment will be concomitants to tribal murders but the infliction of shorter sentences seems a justifiable line for humane experiment.

W. G. A.

## FOLK - SONGS

### *The Meriahs*

At the time of the great Kiabon (Campbell) Sahib's coming, the country was in darkness; it was enveloped in mist.  
Having sent paiks to collect the people of the land, they, having surrounded them, caught the Meriah sacrificers.  
Having caught the Meriah sacrificers, they brought them; and again they went and seized the evil councillors.  
Having seen the chains and shackles, the people were afraid; murder and bloodshed were quelled.  
Then the land became beautiful; and a certain Mokodella (Macpherson) Sahib came.  
He destroyed the lairs of the tigers and bears in the hills and rocks, and taught wisdom to the people.  
After the lapse of a month he built bungalows and schools; and he advised them to learn reading and law.  
They learnt wisdom and reading; they acquired silver and gold.  
Then all the people became wealthy.

J. E. FRIEND-PEREIRA

### *Ao War Songs*

#### I

Sing of the men of the Langbang range.  
When the might of the Atu 'khel' of Yacham  
Was so great that no village of the Aos would fight them,  
The great Noksutongba was born, with the magic swiftness of a horse.  
Ranging far ahead of the warriors of the village,  
Many a Yacham woman did he make a widow  
From the seed of the men whom the marvellous Tamnanungshi slew  
Young shoots grew up.  
These in turn the famous Marishiba cut off in their prime,  
And when only a youth himself won all the ornaments of a warrior.

#### II

O sing of the Mopungsangr generation,  
Each rich and a leader among men.  
Outside the house of Tajongnokshi's father.  
Clustered thick as a crowd of men,  
Mark the posts proclaiming the glorious mithan feasts he has given.  
Your wife of the Chamitsur clan is fair to look upon.  
Yimnatongbong from Miris and Aos  
Took heads single-handed.  
His daughter is as beautiful as a plumed 'dao' handle.  
On the day when she wears hornbill feathers in her hair  
No girl in the village can surpass her for beauty.

J. P. MILLS

# ONE HUNDRED MARIA MURDERS

BY VERRIER ELWIN

## I

### INTRODUCTION

THOUGH criminology in India is distinguished by a number of brilliant monographs by policemen and administrators, our knowledge of crime among the aborigines (apart from that of professional 'criminal tribes') is still elementary. This is due to many causes. The real tribal tradition is to settle its own affairs in the village Court; it is only very reluctantly that it entrusts even homicide to outside settlement. When it does so the real reason for the crime is frequently concealed, for no one is more averse than the aboriginal to washing his dirty linen in public. Many crimes never come to light at all. It is rare that senior officials have the opportunity of personally investigating incidents that occur in areas remote of access.

But as the tribal areas are opened up, and as the aborigines come more and more into touch with the outside world, it will become ever more essential for administrators and magistrates to understand tribal mentality. It is hard enough sometimes to understand any kind of aboriginal action. There is nothing more baffling than aboriginal crime. The Courts are all too ready to save time and energy by accepting a plea of drunkenness as an explanation of what seems incomprehensible. Undoubtedly a proportion of aboriginal crime, like the crime of civilized people, is due to alcohol. But I do not believe the proportion is large and there is reason to suppose that the plea of drunkenness so often put forward is frequently suggested to the accused by his advisors.

The importance of anthropological knowledge for the proper evaluation of aboriginal crime hardly needs illustration. One of the most difficult things that a Court has to decide in a case of homicide is whether the deed that it is evaluating comes under any of the Exceptions to Section 300 of the I. P. C. Was the crime premeditated? Was it provoked by a serious and unbearable insult? The difficulty here, which every Sessions Judge admits, is that what seems an extreme provocation to him may hardly be noticed by the aboriginal, and incidents that seem quite trifling to the 'civilized' mind rouse the Maria or Naga to a fit of homicidal rage. The matter is complicated by the fact that the tribes vary greatly from one to another. The Bison-horn Marias of Bastar, for example, are passionately concerned about female chastity, and a wife's infidelity is constantly a cause of murder. But their Gond and Baiga neighbours to the north have a much lower standard in this matter. Love is comparatively free. Divorce is

easy and a wife's betrayal is readily compensated by the payment of a small fine. It is obvious, therefore, that a Gond or Baiga who suspects his wife of infidelity is not put to anything like the same degree of provocation as that suffered by a Bison-horn Maria.

Premeditation may be indicated by certain tribal customs. The Bison-horn Marias express the spirit of implacable revenge by pulling out their pubic hairs, by removing a few handfuls of grass from an enemy's roof, or by whistling loudly the dreaded *sui* whistle. In any case where an accused is proved to have indulged in one or other of these dramatic symbols, it may be assumed that his crime was premeditated.

A Bastar tragedy, the murder of Tati Hirme by her deceased husband's younger brother Doga, provides an interesting example of how a knowledge of local custom can explain an otherwise meaningless crime. According to tribal practice a younger brother has a right over his elder brother's widow, a right which extends not only to her person, but to her property. This right Tati Hirme refused to Doga, and there is evidence that for a long time the youth bitterly resented her behaviour. On the day of the tragedy he went to her house and asked her for some tobacco. She refused, and he murdered her.

At first sight here is precisely one of those motiveless crimes which have so often puzzled outside observers. It is true that there was hostility between the parties, but the refusal of a small gift of tobacco was hardly sufficient for so disastrous a result. But in Maria practice to ask a woman for tobacco is a symbolic way of inviting her to sexual intercourse, and when the boy asked his elder brother's widow to have congress with him, he was only demanding his right and when it was refused, he found the provocation, both to his pride and his desire, so great that he killed her.

Research both by medical science and by anthropology may in time reveal how far the apparently motiveless homicides of aboriginals can be explained as crimes of exhaustion and fatigue. Again and again a man kills his loved wife in a sudden explosion of temper and for no apparent cause. There is evidence that in many cases the real reason is not alcoholic intoxication, but extreme fatigue.

A point that often troubles the Courts is the time-element in cases where provocation is pleaded as an excuse. It is often found that there is a lapse of some hours between the actual incident that gave provocation and the subsequent act of violence. It has too often been held that this lapse of time should deprive the accused of gaining the benefit from Exception 1 of Section

300 I. P. C. But there can be little doubt that an aboriginal's mind does not work so quickly as that of a more sophisticated person, and even in matters of everyday life it often takes an appreciable time for an idea to take root and effect a result in his mind. Laubscher's analysis of the psychology of the Tembus of South Africa is of some importance here.

I came to the conclusion that once an emotional impulse is aroused and the stimulus continues to be present, the native just drifts along with the impulse and exercises little if any inhibitory power, unless this inhibition is brought about by the evocation of another impulse, opposite in aim to the first, such as a fear of consequences, but it must be a fear stimulated by something present at the moment. Resultingly, the intellectual mechanisms of foresight, judgment and self-control are readily submerged by the instinctive impulse.<sup>1</sup>

## II

## THE BISON-HORN MARIAS

The Bison-horn Marias are a large tribe whose total Bastar population is now probably in the region of 175,000. It is very difficult to get this figure right, because many of the Marias now call themselves Murias and others take what they consider the more honourable titles of Dorla, Koya or Gond. No satisfactory return of the tribe was achieved at the 1941 Census. The distinguishing mark of the Bison-horn Marias is their habit of using a magnificent head-dress of bison-horns for their dances; people who fit into this definition may be found all over South Bastar, in the Jagdalpur, Bijapur, Dantewara and Konta Tahsils, and in the Sukma and Kutru Zamindaris. Their life and customs have been fully described by W. V. Grigson in *The Maria Gonds of Bastar* (Oxford, 1938), and there is no need for me to say very much about them here. They are most charming and delightful people, but hot-tempered, jealous and quick to violence. Yet no tribe could live in a land less likely to provoke to thoughts of murder than they. Their country is a fairyland of beauty, and they themselves enjoy life at an intense level. Their poverty on ordinary standards is great; on primitive standards they are comparatively well-to-do. Their life is so exciting, so varied and so rich in colour and beauty that the observer is often tempted to forget, as they themselves forget, their economic distress. It is no doubt partly due to the fact that they do live so fully and richly that crime is more common than among their duller and more sedate neighbours.

<sup>1</sup> B. J. F. LAUBSCHER, *Sex, Custom and Psychopathology* (London, 1937), p. 306.



## III

## THE BISON-HORN MARIAS AND HOMICIDE

This delightful tribe has long had a bad reputation for violence and drunkenness. But before we condemn the Marias too strongly we should examine the matter statistically and in detail. I will give first a Table which will show the total homicidal crimes in Bastar State under Sections 302 and 304 of the Indian Penal Code during the 10 years 1931 to 1940.

TABLE ONE

*Number of Homicide Cases in Bastar State (under Sections 302 and 304 I. P. C.) for 10 years, 1931-1940*

	Bison-horn Marias.	Ghotul Murias of the North	Others (whole State.)	Total
1931 .. ..	8	1	7	16
1932 .. ..	14	3	10	27
1933 .. ..	8	1	10	19
1934 .. ..	19	2	16	37
1935 .. ..	14	2	7	23
1936 .. ..	8	..	14	22
1937 .. ..	8	2	12	22
1938 .. ..	13	2	13	28
1939 .. ..	15	1	9	25
1940 .. ..	14	7	18	39
Total ..	121	21	116	258

The next Table will relate these figures to the estimated population, both for the tribes and for the State.

TABLE TWO

*Illustrating the relation of homicide cases to the estimated population.*

	Population in 1941.	Annual Average of homicides.	Incidence of homicides to the million. <sup>1</sup>
Bison-horn Marias ..	175,000	12.1	69.14
Ghotul Murias ..	100,000	2.1	21.00
Others .. ..	360,000	11.6	32.22
Total ..	635,000	25.8	40.63

<sup>1</sup> Based on the estimated figures for 1941.

The striking difference in the number of murders committed by the Bison-horn Marias and their neighbours, the Ghotul Murias, is probably to be explained by the fact that the Murias have in their ghotul or dormitory system an ideal method of training the youth of the tribe in the civic virtues, in eliminating jealousy and in teaching everyone to live together as a family. Even the few murders that do take place among the Ghotul Murias occur, for the most part, in villages which have for one reason or another lost their dormitories. Reformers who would banish the dormitory from tribal India should very carefully consider this fact before they do so.

It is not easy to obtain comparative figures for other tribes or communities in India, and I will be most grateful if any readers of *Man in India* will send me some. There is a Maria (but not Bison-horn Maria) population in the Chanda District: here there were 26 cases of homicide in 10 years among a population of 34,776 which works out near the Bison-horn Maria figure of 69 to the million. In 1939, there were 184 persons found guilty under Sections 302 and 304 I. P. C. in the Central Provinces, which gives a figure of approximately 11 to the million. In Mayurbhanj State, in 1935-36 there were 25 similar cases from a population of about 890,000 or about 28 to the million.

Against these figures, the incidence of 69 homicides to the million among Bison-horn Marias seems very high, but it must be remembered that the inhabitants of the Central Provinces and the Orissa States are among the most peaceful people on earth. In the North-West Frontier Province, the number of murders each year is between 800 and 1000, giving an average rate of 300 to the million, and an experienced official tells me that the Punjab rate is certainly above 100 to the million.

Laubscher gives some comparative statistics from various parts of the world. The rate of homicide among South African Pagans was 171 per million in 1935. In 1924, Canada had a homicide rate of 15 per million. In 1926, the rate for England and Wales was 7 per million. In the same year the rate for U. S. A. was 52 per million for the white population and 154 per million for the Negroes.<sup>1</sup>

In India at least all such calculations are bound to be rough and ready. The population figures for individual tribes and areas are often in doubt: some police statistics include all cases of violent death, some only the 'true' homicides. There can be no doubt that many crimes are concealed from the police.

#### IV

#### THE 100 MURDERS

It was to Mr. A. N. Mitchell, I. C. S., Administrator of Bastar in 1940-42 that I owed the suggestion that I should investigate

<sup>1</sup> Laubscher, op. cit., p. 307.

along anthropological and psychological lines the reasons why the Bison-horn Marias were more prone to violence than the other people of the State. A large number of files were unearthed and copied. I visited many villages where murders had been committed and discussed them with the inhabitants. I stood by the memorial pillar to the murderer of Jabeli. At Aranpur I saw the still warm ashes of the clothes of a man who had been hanged in jail. By the kindness of Dr. W. P. S. Mitchell, M. B. E., I was able to spend many hours in the Jagdalpur Jail talking to homicides who were serving terms of life-imprisonment. Mr. K. Radhakrishnan, I. C. S., Administrator, and Mr. A. C. Mayberry, M. B. E., State Superintendent of Police, gave me a great deal of help and supplied me with statistics. Thakur Manbahal Singh's wide knowledge of the Bastar criminal was always freely at my disposal. To my clerk Mr. Sampat Singh I owe a special debt of gratitude. He himself had been in Court during the trials of many homicides, and his knowledge of the people and of the Gondi language was invaluable to me during my enquiry.

The files of homicide cases to which I had access covered a period of 20 years. According to the police statistics, there were 121 Bison-horn Maria homicides in 10 years. I was unable to get the figures for the previous 10 years, but it is certain that they were not higher. The total number of homicides, therefore, in those 20 years could not have been above 250. But not all these files were available. Some had been eliminated, some lost or destroyed. I ultimately was able to collect 103 cases of true homicides where real Bison-horn Marias had been convicted and sentenced. I omitted the last three, and thus obtained what I think is a very fair sample of 100 cases taken entirely at random covering fairly equally the whole period under review, and reported from every part of the Maria area.

The 100 cases involved the conviction of 117 people as follows :—

TABLE THREE

*Punishments awarded in 100 cases, involving the conviction of 117 persons.*

Sentenced to death	..	..	..	..	21
Executed ..	..	..	..	..	18
Transportation for life (20 years imprisonment) under S 302, I. P. C.	..	..	..	..	57
Various terms of imprisonment under S 304, I. P. C.	..	..	..	..	39
Acquitted but detained as insane under S 471, Cr. P. C.					3

The great majority of persons convicted were men, as the next Table shows.

TABLE FOUR

*Sex Ratio in 100 cases, involving 117 convictions*

Male .. .. .	112
Female .. .. .	5

The Bison-horn Marias do not live in complete isolation. They are in contact with other people, what are often called civilized people. But this contact is mainly a business and commercial contact; it is not an emotional one. Normally there are few chances in any relationship between a Maria and a Hindu or Mussalman for the development of those intense and passionate feelings that may lead to murder. This will probably account for the very small number of people murdered who belonged to other communities.

TABLE FIVE

*Illustrating caste of victims in 107 cases*

Fellow-Marias .. .. .	99
Other castes .. .. .	8

Two of these were killed for their possessions in straightforward robbery—a very unusual incident. One of the victims was a Kalar who was going to report a cattle-theft. One was a boy caught in a madman's fury. But it might have been anyone. Another was a Rawat. But the Rawats, who are the herdsmen of the Marias, live so closely with them as to count almost as members of the tribe. Once during a gambling quarrel a Mahara beat a Maria, a serious matter involving the Maria's excommunication. In one case a Mahara woman was chosen as a human sacrifice. In only one case was a member of another caste involved with a Maria woman. A Dhobi tried to seduce a Maria girl, but it was the girl who was murdered.

## V

## SEASONAL VARIATIONS

The relative predominance of constitutional factors in crimes of violence and lust are believed by European criminologists to explain the very striking difference in the seasonal frequency of these crimes. Sullivan gives a Table based on the police reports of indictable offences for 1909 in England which shows that, while there is comparatively little variation in the frequency of crimes of acquisitiveness from month to month, there is a very marked degree of seasonal frequency in crimes of violence and lust, giving a curve of incidence which rises to a maximum in the hot months. This may be explained by the fact that in these forms of delin-

quency biological factors play an important part.<sup>1</sup> Among the Bison-horn Marias seasonal variations though less striking exist, as the following Table shows.

TABLE SIX

*Showing the incidence of 100 homicides by the time of year*

January	..	..	..	9
February	..	..	..	9
March ..	..	..	..	5
April ..	..	..	..	10
May ..	..	..	..	10
June ..	..	..	..	3
July ..	..	..	..	9
August ..	..	..	..	8
September	..	..	..	10
October	..	..	..	12
November	..	..	..	9
December	..	..	..	6

There is a definite increase in the hottest months of the year, April and May, and a corresponding increase in September and October which are also hot and enervating. On the other hand these variations may not be due entirely to climatic causes. The figure for June and July, for example, is only half that of the figure for September and October, but June and July are the months during which everybody is hard at work in their fields. June, in which only 3 murders occurred, is the busiest month of the year and sees the breaking of the monsoon. April and October, which show a heavy incidence of homicides, are festival periods, which are not only occasions for heavy drinking, but by providing opportunities for people to meet together make it possible for disputes to arise and old grievances to be remembered. Yet the influence of festivals must not be exaggerated, as Table Seven will show.

TABLE SEVEN

*Festivals at which tragedies occurred*

January (Bhimul or Gaddi Pandum)	..	2
February (Harvest) .. ..	..	1
April (Wijja Pandum etc.) .. ..	..	3
October (New Eating ceremonies) .. ..	..	4
November (Harvest) .. ..	..	2

<sup>1</sup> W. C. Sullivan, *Crime and Insanity* (London, 1924), pp. 21 ff.

Only 12 murders occurred at festivals and not a single one at a marriage—a fact which in itself should dispose of the myth that landa rice-beer is the most important cause of homicide. For festivals and marriages are the chief occasions when this refreshing but potent drink is brewed and consumed.

## VI

## METHODS OF MURDER

Maria murders are generally straightforward enough: in only 4 cases were people killed while asleep and in only 6 from behind. There was only 1 case of poisoning. The following Table gives the methods used in 100 cases—

TABLE EIGHT

<i>Means employed in 100 Homicides</i>				
Beating with tangia axe	..	..	..	32
pharsi axe	..	..	..	1
gagra blade	..	..	..	1
log from fire	..	..	..	10
heavy stick	..	..	..	14
rice-husker	..	..	..	2
korki hoe	..	..	..	1
fists	..	..	..	1
Shooting with arrow	..	..	..	17
Stabbing with knife	..	..	..	2
arrow	..	..	..	5
trident	..	..	..	1
Strangling	..	..	..	4
Twisting neck	..	..	..	4
Drowning	..	..	..	2
Cutting throat	..	..	..	1
Poisoning	..	..	..	1
Dashing a child on the ground	..	..	..	1

TABLE NINE

<i>Means employed by Women in 5 cases</i>				
Beating and twisting neck	..	..	..	1
Killing husband with axe	..	..	..	2
Killing co-wife with axe	..	..	..	1
Poisoning	..	..	..	1

Among these methods of murder we should especially remark two. Markami Hinga was the Siraha of his village; he had only recently begun his duties and seems to have been very proud of them. One day he had a sudden quarrel with his brother who was annoyed, as not infrequently happens, at having the whole work of the farm thrown upon him as a result of the other's sacred duties. As a result of his abuse Hinga got so angry that he rushed into the temple of his god, took up the trident and chain and stabbed his brother twice in the chest, and so killed him.

There are only 4 cases of murder by throttling in the 100 under review, and it is remarkable that 3 of these occurred within 9 months of one another during the year 1933. The first was on January 6th near Nakulnar, the second on February 21st at Garmiri and the third on August 3rd at Kaurgaon. Moreover, in each case the homicide tried to disguise his murder as a suicide by stringing the corpse of his victim to a tree. The three villages in which these events occurred are in the same area, and it is obvious that a sort of infection of murder by throttling spread among the people and then disappeared.

## VII

### THE CAUSES OF CRIME

I use the word 'cause' rather than 'motive', for motive implies premeditation, and comparatively few of these crimes were premeditated. Indeed many of them were little more than tragic accidents.

I have divided the crimes rather arbitrarily, and, of course, other divisions in many cases would be possible. For example, some of the murders which I have put down under the heading of 'alcohol' might also be classified as quarrels over property, because it is anxiety about possession which seems to come to the front of a Maria's mind when he becomes intoxicated. 'Family quarrels' is also a large subject. The following Table gives an analysis of the causes of murder in 100 cases.

TABLE TEN  
*Causes of Murder in 100 cases*

Robbery or accusation of robbery	..	..	8
Quarrels over property	..	..	15
Suspicion of magic or witchcraft	..	..	5
Resentment at abuse or 'word-magic'	..	..	9
Revenge	..	..	6
Family quarrels	..	..	16
Sex motives	..	..	17
Alcohol	..	..	19
Insanity	..	..	5

## VIII

## THE CAUSES OF CRIME : RELATIONS

## TABLE ELEVEN

*Illustrating the relationship of 107 victims in 100 cases*


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Wives killed by husbands .. ..	18
Husbands killed by wives .. ..	3
Fathers-in-law killed by sons-in-law ..	5
Mothers-in-law killed by sons-in-law ..	3
Young children killed by parents .. ..	6
Brothers killed by brothers .. ..	9
Fathers killed by sons .. ..	3
Mother killed by son .. ..	1
Sisters-in-law by brothers-in-law .. ..	3
Son by father .. ..	1
Other relatives .. ..	10

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Of special interest to the anthropologist are those crimes that arise out of the relationship of people to one another. For example, the taboo that bars an elder brother or cousin from a younger brother's wife is one of the strongest laws of avoidance among all aborigines. A youth Hemla Bakka killed his wife Jimme for having betrayed him with his elder cousin Hemla Dhurwa. During the season when the mangoes ripen Jimme had gone with Dhurwa to collect and eat the fruit, and the husband suspecting them followed and watched them secretly. Dhurwa climbed the tree and shook it; the woman collected the fallen mangoes, and they ate them together. Then Dhurwa took her behind some bushes and was about to have intercourse with her, when Bakka approached them and abused them. Sometime later Bakka returned suddenly from his field to drink water and discovered Dhurwa coming out of his house. He said that he would report the matter to the village elders. There was then a regular family quarrel and in which Bakka's father was beaten, and this so enraged the boy that he struck his wife a heavy blow on the head and killed her. There can be no doubt that in this case Bakka's feelings were outraged not only because his wife was unfaithful, but because she was unfaithful with a forbidden person which might bring all manner of supernatural vengeance upon him—cattle might die and he himself might be afflicted with a psycho-dropsical swelling.

Another case of the same kind is that of Marvi Boti of Telam. Boti and his younger brother Kosa were both living with their father, and were both married. Boti's wife died and he fell in



love with his younger brother's wife, though the villagers say that it was really the girl who made overtures to Boti and threatened to commit suicide if he did not marry her. Kosa suspected his wife and beat her, and this seems to have decided Boti, for a week later he ran away with the girl to the Jeypore Zamindari. After about three weeks Boti decided to go to his father's house to get his children by his former wife. The girl insisted on going with him. As they were approaching Telam they had the misfortune to meet Kosa coming along the same path. Apparently some people returning from a bazaar had told him that Boti had returned, and he had set out to seek vengeance armed with a *gagra*.<sup>1</sup> When the boy saw his elder brother, he said, 'My fate is good, for it has sent you to me, since you have run away with my wife.' And so saying he struck Boti across the face. At that Boti seized his brother by his arms, and there was a struggle in the course of which Kosa was killed.

When Boti returned from jail, he had to make special offerings in addition to undergoing the usual ceremony of purification. Since he had kept his younger brother's wife, he had to sacrifice to the Departed of his house, and to his clan god. If he had not done this, his whole body would have swollen and he would have died. As it was, he was impotent for a whole year after he was released from jail.

The relationship between a man and his parents-in-law is always difficult. But the general tradition in Maria, as in Hindu society, is that the older people should treat a son-in-law with respect and consideration. Neglect of this rule is apt to arouse very strong feelings in a man's mind. Marvi Kesa had three wives, the youngest of whom ran away to her parents' house after a beating. This is a common practice of aboriginal wives, and causes great annoyance to their husbands especially if the parents take their daughter's side. On this occasion Kesa followed his wife to the house and found her enjoying a drink of landa with the neighbours. He went to his father-in-law and asked him why he had not sent his wife back. The older man replied casually that she had only arrived that morning, and this answer so annoyed Kesa that he struck him on the head with his axe and killed him.

In another case it was the mother-in-law who was the victim. Marvi Hinga took his wife Hirme, who was suffering from fever, to a neighbouring village to a Waddai for treatment. He stayed with her during the night and the next morning returned to his house, where he was seen by his mother-in-law. She, thinking that he had left her daughter uncared for and was now wandering

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<sup>1</sup> A sort of dao.

about the villages seeking enjoyment, abused the youth saying that he was an eater of excreta and urine, and that though he had married her daughter he did not take the least care of her. Hinga, who was apparently a very good husband, was so annoyed at receiving this insult from a woman who should have treated him with respect, especially as the words were shouted at him in the hearing of the village from a distance of about twenty-five paces, that he rushed at her and battered her to death with his axe.

The relationship between a son-in-law and the father of a wife who had betrayed him, was at the bottom of the Aranpur murder of 1941. In 1937 Barse Chewa kept Bandi, daughter of Tati Pandu a Maria blacksmith, as his wife. For the bride-price he paid a cow with a calf and a basketful of rice. About a year later Chewa's house caught fire, and his elder brother who was then living with them lodged a complaint with the police that Bandi herself had set fire to the house. She was prosecuted, but acquitted. After the disposal of the case against her, Chewa sent the girl back to her parents, and some time afterwards Lekhami Hunga took her away to Kondasauli as his wife. Chewa now went to his original father-in-law Pandu, and demanded the cost which he had incurred in marrying Bandi. Pandu refused to pay anything on the ground that Chewa had turned her out of his house, and that he himself had had to maintain her for two years. He further claimed that any money that could be extracted from Hunga must come to him and not to Chewa. The quarrel went on for some time until at last Chewa grew so exasperated that he went at night to Pandu's house and shot him in the stomach. A grim touch is given to the incident by the fact that, when Pandu the blacksmith removed the arrow from his stomach, he was able to recognize it as belonging to Chewa, since he himself had made it in his own smithy.

In this case tribal opinion was divided about the question in dispute. The normal rule is that if a woman leaves a husband for another man, he must repay the bride-price (possibly with certain reductions) to the original husband, and that the father of the girl is only entitled to receive money or goods from the first husband and not from his successors. But in this case the matter was complicated by the fact that Chewa had turned the girl out of his house, and that between her first and second marriage she had spent two years in her father's house. The matter was thus a difficult one, and was still further complicated by the fact that Pandu was a blacksmith, and probably did not anticipate fair treatment from the tribal panchayat.

There was a very curious and tragic murder when young sixteen-year old Marvi Hunga killed Hirma, a boy three-years

younger than himself. These two boys were related as uncle and nephew; Hunga's mother was married to the uncle of Hirma's father. This relationship is a privileged one. Just as a grandson may joke with his grandmother, so an uncle may abuse his nephew and even threaten to sleep with his mother, and neither uncle nor nephew is supposed to take any notice of it.

But on this occasion when Hunga, the uncle, met the young boy Hirma in a field and asked him where he was going, the younger boy abused his uncle's mother and wife saying that he would keep them both as his wives; and this so annoyed Hunga that he drew his bow and shot the boy with an arrow. The incident apparently had nothing whatever behind it. The boy was not drunk and was on good terms with the deceased. He seems to have been suddenly, but quite improperly, excited by the abuse given by his nephew, and in a few moments two lives were ruined.

## IX

## THE CAUSES OF CRIME: DOMESTIC INFIDELITY

The Marias, while allowing their women a great deal of freedom in the pre-nuptial period, have a very strict regard for matrimonial relationships. Adultery is rare and is visited by supernatural punishment. Divorce occurs but seldom, and generally for the most serious reasons. The number of murders associated with sex<sup>1</sup> testifies to the very strong emotions that are roused by any disturbance of the domestic life of the tribe.

Most Marias consider themselves entirely justified in killing their wives for infidelity. For example, Poyami Masa had two wives, Gadme and Dome. One day Dome found her elder co-wife in conversation with a Dhobi who was trying to seduce her. In order to get him to go away Gadme told him to come at night to the house and that she would meet him. When Masa came home from his work, the younger wife told him everything, probably only too glad to make trouble. He became very angry and beat Gadme and took her immediately to confront the Dhobi, but was unable to find him. Then he went to the headman to ask him to take action against the Dhobi. All day long he was in a passion of rage, clenching his teeth and continually talking about his wife's scandalous behaviour. When she tried to give him food, he refused to take it. After supper Gadme and her

<sup>1</sup> But as elsewhere in India 'lust-murder' does not occur. 'Lust-murder, as one of the phenomena of *psychopathia sexualis*, appears to be better known in the more highly cultured countries of the West than in the East, where capital offences have their basis in less recondite mental processes.' S. M. Edwardes, *Crime in India* (Oxford, 1924), p. 28.

three children went to bed, but Masa lay awake in the dark until he could contain himself no longer. Just before dawn he got up and stabbed Gadme with an arrow. He was probably intending by this to make it look as though Gadme has committed suicide out of remorse for her behaviour. But he did not do his work properly, and the woman lived long enough to say what had happened to her. In this case the Court took into consideration the fact not only that Masa had been wronged, but that he believed himself to have been wronged by a member of a caste which the Marias despise.

Poyami Podiya was a young man of about twenty years who had been married only for a year. He either suspected or (as he himself claimed) actually discovered his wife having intercourse with another man. He beat her with his fists and dragged her to the jungle in spite of several remonstrances from the neighbours, and went on beating her there till she fell to the ground. Even then, as he himself admitted, when he found she still had some life in her, he determined to make an end of her and her intrigues with her lover. He tied a twisted creeper-thong round her neck, but finding it was not long enough for the purpose, tied a cloth round her neck and to a tree. Probably he first strangled her, and then tied her up to give the impression of suicide. During his trial Podiya showed no sign of appreciating the enormity of his crime, which he seems to have regarded as a just retribution for his wife's unchastity.

The story of the murder of Kopa by Ujji Poda at Kaurgaon, on the bank of the Indrawati River, is a remarkable narrative of forbearance that at last could endure no longer. Kopa was a younger cousin-brother of Poda and was at one time his kabari or farm-servant. Five years before the murder Poda discovered that Kopa was enjoying a love affair with his wife, to whom he stood in a privileged relationship. It is believed by the Marias that such an affair when discovered is very dangerous for the husband, who must be protected by a ceremony of purification called in Halbi *pāni milāna*. This ceremony was performed and Kopa left Poda's wife alone for a time. But they were evidently really in love with one another, and soon their intimacy began again. In July 1933, Poda discovered this and turned Kopa out of his house and service. Kopa went to live with another cousin in the same village.

On the night of Sunday July 30th, Kopa crept into Poda's house in the middle of the night in order to be with Poda's wife. But while they were together, her hand accidentally knocked against her husband who was sleeping by her side and woke him. Kopa ran for his life, but not before he had been recognized.

The following day news came that a member of the family in another village had died, and Poda with his wife and Kopa all went to the place for the funeral ceremonies. On the Wednesday there was an open quarrel there between the two men, and Poda told the elders of the village of Kopa's behaviour and beat him publicly. Kopa ran away and hid in the forest, and then on the Thursday everyone went home.

That afternoon three of Poda's servants were working in his field, weeding the kosra crop. In the field there was the usual field-hut in which the cultivators rest and guard the crops. It was raining that day, and at about 4-30 in the afternoon Kopa arrived there carrying a bamboo umbrella and sat down by the fire in the field-hut to dry himself. A little later Poda came and when he saw who was sitting there he fell into a great rage, beat Kopa several times with his bare fists, knocked him on his back, sat on his chest and throttled him with both hands. The three servants did not dare to interfere, but stood watching.

Then Poda had the body taken to another hut in someone else's field and tied a rope round the neck of the corpse, and strung it up to the roof to give the impression that the dead man had committed suicide. He bribed the witnesses and told everyone who knew anything about the matter to make a report of suicide, and this was done.

The remarkable thing about this case is not the violence with which the murder was committed, but the very great forbearance shown by Poda. After forgiving Kopa the first time he discovered his fault, he himself went to the expense of marrying him to a young girl, perhaps with the idea that this would divert his attention. Even on the second occasion he refrained from physical violence, and contented himself with turning the boy out of his house. Few Marias would have failed to kill Kopa immediately after he had been discovered in the house at night. But all Poda did was to put the matter before the village elders. It seems to have been Kopa's impertinence in going to the hut and sitting there as if nothing had happened that suddenly deprived Poda of his self-control. The Court, taking these matters into consideration, sentenced him to only five years' imprisonment.

Hemla Gunda was the Dhurwa or clan-priest of the Hemla Clan-God. He was also a well-known medicine-man and, although he was excommunicated for reasons that will appear immediately he was a person of great influence among the Marias of Bijapur Tahsil.

He was, however, a cruel and unnatural man. About a year before his murder, he seduced the wives of each of his two sons,

and not content merely to seduce them drove out of his house his own wife and his two sons, and lived there openly with the two young girls. He refused to do anything to maintain his wife and would not give his sons any share in the family property, although by tribal custom he should have allowed its partition, since he was doing nothing to support his family.

When the sons applied to the tribal panchayat for justice that body met, but so great was Gunda's influence that they were afraid to take any strong line against him. But they did excommunicate him for his relations with the wives of his own sons and for the even more serious offence of keeping a Ghasia woman.

In May 1928, one of the sons, Hemla Mundra, went to his father's house and tried to get some share of the property. He failed then, but on the afternoon before the murder he went again to take away two cows from the family herd. His father caught him and abused him, and the boy was so annoyed that he struck the older man on the face with a lathi, a blow that probably fractured the jaw. Gunda prepared to go to the police station to make a report against his son. Mundra, reflecting that his father had not only robbed him of his wife and property, but was now going to deprive him of his liberty as well, decided to kill him and prevent him from going to the police. He managed to get ahead of Gunda on the path, and the moment he appeared broke his skull with several blows of a heavy stick.

The murder was regarded by the other Marias as justified, and they hushed up the whole affair, reporting to the police that Gunda had died of smallpox. Indeed the case would never have come to light, had it not been that a prisoner in jail in the vain hope of getting his own sentence mitigated reported the matter. Mr Grigson, who tried the case, sentenced the accused to one month's imprisonment.

In several cases the discovery of a wife in the actual act of intercourse has led to murder, sometimes of the woman, sometimes of her lover. In Chhindgaon a man of about thirty-five years, Burka by name, began to suspect his wife of deceiving him with Hirma, a neighbour who lived opposite. One afternoon—it was Tuesday December 16th 1924—the woman told her husband that she was going to catch fish in a tank. Burka was suspicious and watched her. He saw her go across the road to where Hirma was winnowing grain, and after a word or two with him towards the tank. After a little while, Burka went over to Hirma's house to see if he was there, but did not find him. So he got his axe and went off in search of him. Below the tank he saw Hirma and his wife going into the jungle together. He crept quietly

to the place, and there discovered Hirma in the act of sexual congress with his wife. He struck Hirma on the back with his axe and rolled him over, and then gave him four blows on the head and left him for dead. His wife sprang up, but he gave her a heavy blow with the back of his axe behind the left ear. She fell to the ground and he gave her a second blow just above the first, and she died.

Burka then went and told the Kotwar of the village what he had done, and with the Kotwar went to the Manjhi. When they went to see the bodies, they found Hirma still alive and Burka tried to get his axe in order to kill him. But he was prevented.

## X

### THE CAUSES OF CRIME : FEAR OF MAGIC

Witchcraft and the fear of it, magic and human sacrifice, do not seem to have been so common a cause of murder among the Bison-horn Marias as we would expect. During the twenty years under review, a few cases of human sacrifice were reported from the North of the State, and one very notorious case from a leading Gond family in Bhopalpatnam. From among the Bison-horn Marias only one such case came before the Courts. This does not mean, of course, that there were no other cases, for these are the very crimes that the people would be most concerned to conceal.

In 1938 at Mardum near Katakalian a Mahara woman who was four months pregnant was sacrificed to the presiding deities of a tank. A Maria caught her and drowned her in the water. He then cut her open and ceremonially killed the foetus by slitting its neck in honour of Mirchuk Deo and the Yer Kanyang (Water Maiden) of the tank. Immediately after the murder he scattered the woman's blood over the field bordering the tank, and prayed to Mirchuk and the Yer Kanyang to bless the tank and field and to give him a good harvest. Very early next morning he went to the place and ploughed the blood-stained land with the hope that it would now be exceptionally fertile.

The dread of witchcraft or enchantment is a more powerful factor driving men to violence, for the fear is still a very live one and the dangers are supposed to be great. Guma Hunga left his home and village because he believed that his family was being bewitched by a man called Burgi. A year afterwards he saw his enemy in the new village to which he had moved, and murdered him in a sudden access of fear. Sori Bhima killed a neighbour Kosa, who suffered from yaws, believing him to be a wizard and

responsible for the death of his children. Vedta Sukra murdered his uncle Kola, the headman of Surguda, for being a wizard. Three years before Sukra's three-year old daughter had died, and the cause had been diagnosed as Kola's magic. Immediately before the tragedy, Sukra's little son died after a month's illness, and members of the family went to a Siraha at Sarjiguda to find out why. The Siraha invoked the deity Madin Deo on to his person, and the deity declared through him that the death was the result of Kola's magic. The next day Sukra went with a number of villagers to the place where his child had been cremated. Heaps of rice were placed in front of the ashes, in the names of Mirchuk (which kills children), the Village Mother, the Departed, Bhagavan and the suspect Kola. A chicken was allowed to make its choice among the heaps, and it pecked up rice from those of Mirchuk and Kola. From this the people deduced that Kola had killed the child with the help of Mirchuk Deo.

The following day Kola was found lying dead in a pool of blood on his own thrashing-floor. Sukra admitted his crime and no doubt considered that his action was justified and indeed laudable.

One other example of this kind of murder may be given. One day the sago palm belonging to Hunga of Gudse village ceased to give the usual juice. Hunga went to the village Siraha, a man called Kosa, to find out what was the matter, and received the reply that it was due to the magic of Pandru, one of the neighbours. Sometime later, Pandru and Kosa met in the local liquor shop and had a drink together, and presently Kosa accused Pandru to his face of doing magic against Hunga's tree. Pandru became very angry at this, and abused Kosa and his gods. Expressing himself in typical Maria fashion, he pulled out a few of his pubic hairs and threw them on Kosa's head. Kosa slapped Pandru's face twice and went away.

Nothing happened for five months. But then on the evening of the 14th of April 1922, Kosa went out to look for a straying cow. His way took him near Pandru's house who, when he saw his enemy, got out his bow and arrow and shot him in the stomach.

## XI

### THE CAUSES OF CRIME : ALCOHOL

How far does the drinking of alcohol explain the heavy incidence of homicide among the Bison-horn Marias? It is commonly said that drinking and especially the drinking of landa rice-beer is the main cause of murder in this tribe. It is true that a plea of drunkenness is frequently put forward by accused persons in the Court.



But there is reason to suppose that frequently this is suggested to them by their counsel. In several cases which I have examined the excuse of intoxication was not made by the accused in his confession to the police, or before the lower Court. It was introduced as an afterthought before the Sessions Judge. In the 100 cases the Court only accepted as true a plea of drunkenness in 19 instances. Of these 19, 13 cases of intoxication were due to landa, 4 to mahua spirit and 2 to palm juice. Landa intoxication usually occurred during festivals, the only time when this drink is normally available to the people.

TABLE TWELVE

*Illustrating the influence of liquor on homicide in 100 cases*

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Due to drinking <i>landa</i> beer	..	..	..	13
<i>mahua</i> spirit	..	..	..	4
salphi juice	..	..	..	1
toddy juice	..	..	..	1
Due to other causes	..	..	..	81

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The question of alcoholism as a cause of crime has been discussed in an important article by Dr. Norwood East, a former Commissioner of Prisons in England. He describes how he examined a series of 100 unselected cases of men and youths, who had been tried for murder in post-war years and had been examined by him. Alcohol was a predominant or contributing cause of the homicide in 19 cases. Dr. East concludes from this and from an examination of other investigations that there appears to be no reason at the present time to consider alcohol as 'more than an occasional factor in the causation of crime in England.'

'Every practical criminologist' he says, 'will attach some importance to the association of alcoholism and crime. It is, however, very easy to over-emphasize the connection'.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Olof Kinberg has an even impressive judgment on this point. 'Many see in the use of alcoholic liquors perhaps the worst social cancer, if not the root of all social evils, and are therefore inclined to consider drink one of the main causes of criminality too. It is most unlikely that such a schematic and uncomplicated view is correct. Social problems are usually very intricate and very simple solutions have so far always been found wanting.

<sup>1</sup> W. NORWOOD EAST 'The Problem of Alcohol in Relation to Crime,' *The British Journal of Inebriety*, Vol. XXXVII (1939), pp. 55 ff.

‘It cannot be denied, however, that alcoholic liquor is very liable to change an individual’s mode of reaction, and therefore plays an important part as a crimino-etiological factor. The most prominent psychological effects of alcohol are: emotional changes, usually in the direction of euphoria and increased irritability, but occasionally towards dysphoria (especially in the later stages of intoxication); reduced inhibition of drive impulses, particularly of a sexual nature; more optimistically coloured judgments; a reckless disposition; reduced control of actions; increased physical mobility, with a tendency to impulsive and thoughtless action; a general lowering of the moral level. These effects indicate that intoxication is conducive to certain kinds of criminality, such as acts of violence—assault, manslaughter, rape and other sexual crimes, defamation and resistance to the police. Alcohol is, as a matter of fact, a more or less important contributory cause in many such crimes.’<sup>1</sup>

Typical crimes of drunkenness among the Marias may be briefly illustrated. A man and his wife were illegally distilling mahua liquor in a field. They both got very drunk on the fresh spirit and as they went staggering home, the woman fell and broke the pot, and her husband beat and killed her in a drunken fury. One day a party of men met to gamble. One of them (as is generally the case, since gambling is not an aboriginal vice) was a Mahara. The party drank a lot of salphi juice, and perhaps some mahua spirit as well. There was a quarrel and the Mahara beat one of the Marias, a serious matter as the latter would be excommunicated. The Maria in his drunken rage killed the Mahara and then gave himself up to the police.

12 out of the 13 cases where murder was due to drinking landa rice-beer occurred at festivals. But it is important to notice that there was not a single murder during a marriage, though this is a time when more landa is drunk than at any other. It may be that, since marriages are occasions for the meeting of people from many different villages, everyone is on his best behaviour. Festivals are homely and domestic affairs at which old grudges and enmities flare up more readily. For example, at one festival a man abused his elder brother’s wife for not tethering the cattle properly or clearing away the cow-dung. She abused him in return, and in his drunken, fit he stabbed her with an arrow. At another festival party, one of the revellers got hungry and asked his mother for food. She told him to ask his wife, and his wife said she was too busy. The man picked up a hoe and killed his mother. Sori Pandu of Mokhpal was notorious for the fits of

<sup>1</sup> O. KINBERG, *Basic Problems of Criminology* (Copenhagen and London, 1935), p. 211.

rage to which he was subject when he was drunk. One day he went to play his sarangi-fiddle at a landa party. There was a drunken quarrel, and Pandu tried to kill his uncle with an axe. The others managed to stop him. So he went home and got out his bow and arrow and shot him.

In most of these cases intoxication was the immediate cause of the murder. There does not seem to have been any long-standing enmity between the parties, and most of the incidents should really be regarded as tragic accidents. It is only occasionally that the Maria uses landa to free himself from his inhibitions. Poyami Panda had suspected his wife of intimacy with a neighbour, Nanda, for months past, but he had not taken any serious action about it until on the night of a festival, after he had drunk a lot of landa, he caught Nanda and his wife together and, his inhibition and fears of punishment having been removed by the alcohol he had taken, he killed his wife's seducer.

Toddy was responsible for only one homicide but that a very tragic one. Father and son were living together amicably. One evening the father tapped his toddy tree and brought home a gourdful of the juice. They drank it together. Over supper the son asked his father for a loan, but the old man refused, and the youth fell into a drunken rage and killed his father while he was still eating.

The Marias themselves say that mahua spirit is the most intoxicating and dangerous of their drinks. Landa is a food as well as an intoxicant and does less harm : it causes more murders than mahua spirit only because it is more widely drunk. They do not consider that any difference in its potency comes from making it with rice or with kosra millet. It is the mixing of drinks, landa with salphi juice or mahua spirit, that generally causes trouble.

## XII

### THE CAUSES OF CRIME : FATIGUE

An important individual and mesological cause of crime which is largely overlooked in discussions of the subject in India is fatigue. This is so relevant that I make no apology for quoting Professor Kinberg at length upon the subject. Fatigue is the result of environment conditions, work, of other circumstances that strain the working capacity and willingness of the individual and may in its turn produce serious psychical changes, sometimes of a pathological kind.

'Great exhaustion will occasionally produce actual psychoses of a confusive type. A disturbed consciousness of externals,

the presence of hallucinations and delusional ideas, may then naturally enough produce criminal actions. But even in cases where fatigue does not give rise to such pronounced mental disorders, it may produce a change of personality which, under certain circumstances, may result in criminal actions.

'The psychological fatigue-phenomena that are of special importance as crime factors are a strong feeling of dysphoria, dejection and irritability, worry, desperation, and an unreflecting, vague wish to escape from a situation which seems intolerable. Any intensification of the complicated emotional condition may cause a tendency to obnubilation, which weakens further the automatic action control.

'In recent years I have seen many cases by which my attention has been drawn to the crimino-etiological significance of fatigue. Most of these belonged to the agricultural classes, daughters or wives of small farmers. As a rule, small farmers in Sweden, whether freehold or tenant, cannot afford to hire sufficient labour. All the members of the family: husband, wife, and children, must therefore strain every nerve to keep the whole going. This labour is particularly hard on the married women, who, besides tending the cattle and working in the fields, must also do all the domestic work, and to whom, above all, pregnancy is an additional burden.'

I believe that this may explain some of the apparently inexplicable aboriginal crimes in Bastar where, for example, a man kills a dearly-loved wife in a flash of temper simply because his dinner is not ready in time. Marvi Mundra and his wife came home very late one evening in October after working all day in the fields. When they reached the house, the girl at once began to cook their supper, and after a short time Mundra asked if it was ready. She said rather crossly that it was on the fire, and that directly it was ready she would give it to him. Mundra, exhausted by his long day in the fields and by the prospect of a still longer night watching the crops, lost his normal 'automatic control,' picked up a stick from the fire and gave his wife three heavy blows which killed her.

Barse Kama, a man about thirty-five years old, earned his living by grazing the village cattle. His wife who was eight months with child had been out collecting young bamboo shoots for food. Kama came in at midday exhausted, and found that his food was not ready and his wife lying down for a brief rest. She explained that she had only just returned from the jungle, and was very tired. He abused her and she replied that she could not prepare the meal any faster, and that if he wanted food more quickly

<sup>1</sup> KINBERG, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

he had better find another woman. Kama experienced a sudden explosion of rage, picked up his axe and struck his wife as she was lying on the mat. She died that night. Kama claimed that he was drunk at the time, but this was not accepted by the Court. In fact, he was intoxicated with fatigue.

Veko Dome, about twenty-five years old, was very busy gathering the kosra grain in his fields. On the eve of the tragedy, in the last week of November 1922, there was no rice in his house, and the family took pej in the morning and in the evening drank a little of what was left. They all went to sleep without any proper food. Dome himself did not even get the stale pej in the evening. Early next morning he went to his field again, and while he was away the rest of the family had some kosra gruel. Then Dome's wife and his aunt Torka went to the fields to work. It had by now begun to drizzle. Dome asked his aunt if she had brought any food. She said as it was raining she had not brought any, and told him to go home and get it. At this he grumbled and the old woman got annoyed and said, 'What have you been doing in the field? Have you been eating excreta?' The women squatted down and began to reap the kosra. Dome quietly went and got his axe, walked up behind his aunt and struck her several times on the head, and she died without a sound. Dome went into the jungle for a time but returned home in the evening, drank some gruel and went to sleep in a hut behind the house. He had been working hard in the fields since midday of the preceding day, and had had no food at all. His exhaustion drove him as surely as any alcoholic orgy to commit his crime.

Murders arising because a wife or other relation fails to give food in time may also be connected with the powerful oral needs of all aboriginals, which reflect the infantile nature of their culture. Laubscher has studied the underlying causes for the large number of stock thefts in South Africa. He finds that these are ultimately based on the people's craving for meat. The Tendu tribesman places a great value on meat as a food and whenever meat is available he gorges himself to the utmost. 'There is something ravenously sadistic in his attitude towards meat. It is not only a great delicacy, but it is credited with great health-giving qualities. Elders have frequently remarked that the change of the times, the paucity of cattle, sheep and goats, have reduced to a minimum the meat supplies of the people. Once upon a time when cattle roamed in huge herds and they had plenty of meat to eat, their people were strong and healthy, but now they only have meat once or twice a month, and then not sufficient is available to make them feel they need not eat again for a few days.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> LAUBSCHER, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

Cattle theft is similarly very common among the Marias, and I have little doubt that a denial of oral needs that are commonly fulfilled without difficulty, throws them off their balance and drives them to violence. As among the Tembus, these oral activities are shown in the Marias' craving for bulk in food—they always eat and drink in large quantity however poor the quality may be—their love of tobacco to smoke and chew and their ready addiction to alcohol.

Oral needs are closely connected with the sexual impulse. It is remarkable that in no fewer than 6 cases, murder directly followed a wife's refusal to allow her husband sexual congress. Habka Masa killed his wife Pakli in consequence of a long dispute, but immediately before the tragedy she refused to lie with him. Barse Chappe, a polygamous invalid, was first refused by both his wives and later by his senior wife because he desired to perform the act in public. Marvi Deva saw his wife with a man and when, probably to test her, he asked her to give herself to him and she refused, he killed his baby daughter and tried to kill her. Kosa, an almost imbecile paralytic, asked his wife to have intercourse with him; she abused him and he stabbed her to death. Doga, rejected by his elder brother's widow, was so affronted that he killed her. Mundra, who so brutally treated his wife Pande, asked her to have sexual congress with him and was refused only an hour before he met his death at her hands.

### XIII

#### THE CAUSES OF CRIME: DISPUTES ABOUT PROPERTY

A large proportion of murders were due to quarrels about property. The Bison-horn Marias have long advanced from the simple communal existence of the more primitive tribes such as the Hill Marias and the Hill Juangs. They have begun to take a pride in personal possessions, in large herds of cattle, good houses and spreading fields. In many cases the quarrels have arisen about land and cattle. In one case, for example, Khotla had long been demanding the partition of cattle jointly owned by himself and his brother. On the day of the murder he abused his brother all evening and got killed for his pains. In another case, Marvi Masa abused Ganga in a liquor shop where they had been drinking together on account of a long-standing dispute about land. They fought and Masa was killed.

Several of the disputes arose out of question of inheritance and partition, some of them very complicated. Dudhi Bhima and his uncle, Marvi Deva, lived on opposite sides of a field at Pordem and cultivated it jointly. The original owner had

abandoned the field when his father died, as it was supposed that an evil spirit lived there. After a few years Deva fell ill and his father died also, and he too left the field. Bhima cultivated the land for four years, and thus actually became the legal owner, though he failed to get this fact registered officially. Then Deva returned and claimed the land back again. Bhima refused to surrender it. There was a long quarrel and dispute, and finally Deva began ploughing up the land, and this so angered Bhima that he killed him.

Manjhi Khotla had long been demanding partition of the family property. But the two brothers had married two sisters, and the elder brother, who regarded them as a joint family with himself as the patriarchal head, refused the claim. On the day of the tragedy, Khotla abused his brother all day till late in the evening he met his fate.

Marvi Buti was a very provocative person. He gave his step-brother land and charged him double rent. Then he took the land away from him. Then he threatened to get his brother's crop damaged by cattle, and at last quarrelled so violently that he was killed. Miriami Hurra gave his younger cousin, Doga, two cows on hire, but received no proper payment for them. One evening, before the harvest was ready, he went to Doga's house and demanded payment as usual. Doga asked where he could get rice before the harvest, and in a sudden burst of rage picked up a bit of wood and struck his creditor so hard that he died.

Sometimes the quarrels arise about what may seem to the outsider quite trivial matters, though we should never fall into the error of judging the value of things to an aboriginal by our own standards. For example, two murders were committed on account of cocks, one a cock that was needed at a feast in honour of a brother-in-law and the other a fighting-cock. In another case the quarrel arose between two brothers about the possession of a drum which was sold for two rupees ten annas, out of which the real owner only got a rupee. In yet another case a youth murdered his own father as a result of a dispute over a tobacco crop. The son had a debt of four rupees to pay, and he asked his father to give him the tobacco so that he could sell it and pay off his debt. The father wanted the proceeds to lie close by himself. Tempers rose quickly and soon the father was saying that his son could sell the children to pay off his debt, but he would never part with his tobacco, a remark that cost him his life.

#### XIV

#### THE CAUSES OF CRIME : REVENGE

The motives of revenge and implacable enmity operate in many cases. The Marias have various symbolic methods of

expressing their hatred. One of these is to remove three handfuls of straw from an enemy's roof. This was done in a case where the murderer had a long-standing enmity with his victim, which came to a head over a quarrel about the cutting of an embankment. Another symbol is to pull out a few of the pubic hairs and to whistle loudly with one finger in the mouth. This was done by Muchaki Dasru shortly before he killed a man for not giving him the tribute that was due to him as Siraha of the village and by Marvi Oyami Masa as he led his party to murder his cousin, Marvi Masa. Kartami Aitu dipped his hand in his victim's blood and made a mark on his own head. He cut the ground of the threshold with his axe in dramatic symbol of his triumph over the dead man's family.

In some cases hostility between two Marias may continue for years before it breaks out into open conflict. Thus Vetti Hirma had been on bad terms for several years with Rawa Hirma, who was ultimately to be his victim. It began by a quarrel over land. Then when both were probably a little drunk at a Chikma New Eating Festival, they tried to shoot each other with arrows, but missed their aim. It was only after three years that at last the theft of a pumpkin aroused Vetti to such a state of anger that he beat his enemy to death.

Murami Dhurwa was sentenced to transportation for life, and was released from jail in 1929. Ten months after his release, he quarrelled with his wife and the annoyance thus caused seems to have reminded him of wrongs over which he must have been brooding for years. He went out of his house to find his nephew who had failed to give evidence in his favour in the original case against him. He beat him and killed him.

Resentment at being abused is another cause of homicide. The subject of aboriginal abuse or *gāli* is obscure, and outsiders often find it hard to understand why expressions that are continually used in ordinary conversation should sometimes arouse the most passionate feelings of indignation. The most abusive terms are sometimes actually used in love-making, and a Maria employs the word *mailotia*, for example, which means 'cohabit with your mother' as freely as a British soldier uses the word "bloody" and generally with as little meaning.

For *gāli* to be offensive everything depends on the occasion, the tone of voice and the relationship of the people concerned. Word-magic is an important and dangerous element in Maria life. A witch can make a man impotent by giving him 'corpse-abuse.' It is possible for a man to use an expression in a certain tone of voice which would normally be entirely inoffensive, but which



under the circumstances is so dangerous and insulting as to lead to murder. A mother-in-law, for example, may abuse her son-in-law privately as much as she wishes. But if she shouts an insulting epithet at him in the presence of half the village, she has committed an unbearable insult.

Two types of abuse are not used in ordinary conversation. You do not call somebody a thief—unless you want trouble. You certainly do not call anyone a witch or a wizard. In a number of our cases the allegation that someone was a thief or a wizard led to murder.

Excreta-abuse is also not very common in daily life. In several cases it has led to murder. Thus the elder of two brothers told the younger that he was eating excreta. A son-in-law killed his father-in-law when he told him that he ate the excreta and the urine of his wife. A nephew killed his aunt for accusing him of eating excreta.

On two occasions fathers were killed by sons for insulting them. One father told his son to 'get out of the house' and was killed for it. Another father, who was asked by his son for a loan of money, replied that the boy might sell his own children for the money, but he would not get it from him. Such remarks were not to be endured.

The most common *gāli* in everyday life is the sexual-*gāli*, the words *mailotia* and *bāplotia*, suggestions that somebody should lick the private parts or eat the pubic hairs, the references to the chastity of wife or sisters. Such abuses are so common that they should not normally rouse anyone to the pitch of intense excitement necessary for committing homicide. But the truth is that there is a strict etiquette in these matters, and while a lot of filthy talk is tolerated provided the conditions are right, any breach of the rules will cause an explosion of temper that may end in tragedy.

## XV

### THE CAUSES OF CRIME: FEAR

Any attempt to implicate other people in a crime is bitterly resented by the Marias, and has been the cause of some of their most sensational and carefully organized murders. In the famous Jabeli murder Marvi Masa accused his cousin Oyami Masa of being a cattle thief, and it is possible that he had really stolen cattle from a village in Sukma Zamindari. In the Court it was also alleged that Marvi Masa had accused Oyami Masa of instigating some Maharas to report to the police that he had burnt their

houses. Probably afraid that if these stories got round to the police they would be in trouble, Oyami Masa collected five of his relatives and they all went together and beat Marvi Masa to death.

So again six Marias were involved in a robbery during a famine year, and when two of them were caught, they were murdered by the others to prevent them turning approver. In another case two men were on their way to make a report at the Kuakonda police station about the theft of a cow, and in order to avoid arrest and imprisonment the thieves followed and murdered them. Here there was probably a strong feeling that a case of this kind ought to be settled by the tribal elders, and not go to the police.

## XVI

## SPECIAL CASES: THE LAMHADA

Among the Marias, as in many other parts of tribal India, there is an arrangement whereby youths from poor families who cannot afford the price of a bride can serve for her for three, five or seven years. In Bastar such a youth is known as Lamhada, Lamka or Gharjamai. The relations between the Lamhada and his future parents-in-law is not always a happy one, and it is complicated by the intimate proximity in which he has to live with the girl to whom he is not yet married. Sometimes, however, especially if the Lamhada happens to make the girl pregnant, the marriage is celebrated before the end of his term of service.

Only two cases of murder have arisen out of a Lamhada situation. The first reproduced incidents that are constantly happening all over India. Kalmumi Masa was living as a Lambada in the house of his widowed mother-in-law, Hungi, and Kohale to whom he was already married, though he was still fulfilling his contract of service. The two women, as often happens when they deal with a youth of this kind (for the Lamhada as a poor boy and often without relatives is generally despised), were careless in their treatment of him, and did not bother to cook properly. A few days before the tragedy they went out for a funeral ceremony, and Hungi only sent Kohale home very late in the evening to see to her husband's food. When he found that nothing had been prepared, he was very angry and the girl ran away and spent the night in a fig tree for fear of being beaten.

The next day a panchayat was called to consider the relations of Masa and his wife. Masa objected to his affairs being discussed in public, and probably suspected that his mother-in-law had too much influence with the panchayat. He had to be forcibly brought to the meeting which decided that the women were not

cooking properly for the boy, and ordered them to behave better in future. But Masa was also reproved. He was slapped by the Gaita (priest) and ordered not to beat his wife who was six months with child. Masa was very angry at this, and removed his things from Hungi's house. He no longer ate there, but used to go there to sleep. He did not go away immediately to another village, because he wanted to take his wife with him, get his share of the rice crop and make arrangements for removing the cattle.

Hungi, of course, did not want to lose Masa's service. She was entirely dependent on him for the cultivation of her land. She persuaded her daughter to refuse to go away with him, and did everything she could to stop him removing his grain. On the eve of the tragedy the boy filled three baskets with rice, and put it ready for removal the following morning. Hungi said that she would on no account let him take it, and spent the night sleeping in front of it, on guard with her two children. Early in the morning Masa went to get his rice. The old woman tried to prevent him, and her daughter seems to have helped her. Masa flew into a rage and struck her heavily, and killed her. Kohale tried to intervene, and he so injured her also that she died a fortnight later.

The other tragedy arising out of the relations between a Lamhada and the family he was serving occurred when Markami Wango killed his future wife Paike, a young girl of about fifteen, for being unfaithful to him. Wango was a Maria blacksmith, and went to live with Marvi Risami at Bastanar as a Lamhada. He stayed with him for about eighteen months, and the marriage was planned for that very year.

Before the actual tragedy there were a number of quarrels. About a month before Wango and Paike went with two other boys to get ore from Lakhapal Hill. One of these boys was Kuma, the son of Risami's elder brother and as such forbidden to Paike. Wango went away for a time and when he returned caught Kuma and Paike in sexual intimacy. He threw stones at her and said he would kill all the Marvis. Later Wango publicly accused Kuma of flirting with his girl and diverting her affection from himself. This was a dangerous accusation that might involve the family in a tribal fine and Risami rebuked the boy for it. In a rage Wango left the house, and when his future father-in-law followed threw a stone at him and caused him a minor injury. A little while afterwards, Wango went back to the house to get his dancing outfit (a set of different-sized bells, waist-bands and necklaces). As he was collecting it Paike came to him and told him not to take it away because it belonged to her. Wango at once shot her just below the left breast with an arrow, and ran

away with his things. The girl died after three days from an acute generalized peritonitis.

In the Court Wango declared that the immediate cause of the tragedy was that, when he went back to the house for his dancing outfit, he found Kuma and Paike together. This would not only have angered him because he had found his future wife unfaithful, but because both Kuma and Paike were Marvis and their act was regarded as incestuous.

## XVII

## THE CRIMES OF WOMEN

5 of the 100 murders were committed by woman. Two of these were typical women's crimes arising out of annoyance and exasperation over comparatively small matters. In one case two women, both of whom had been married to the same man and were now widows, were living together. The older widow was so tiresome and so continually nagged the younger that at last the girl could stand it no longer, and gave her three blows with an axe whereon she died. In another case, a man and his wife were collecting red ants for food when they heard the cries of a child in extremity. They went to the place and found a little girl about ten years old lying on the ground with her neck broken. She had been killed by her step-mother for not doing what she was told. The older woman had climbed up a tree and was picking the leaves and throwing them down. She called to the child and asked her to bring her basket closer so that she could drop the leaves directly into it. When the child disobeyed, her step-mother came down from the tree and beat and kicked her, then twisted her neck till she died. Both the older woman and the girl were weak and hungry for want of food. There was no rice in their house and they had been living on mahua for days. Fatigue and hunger played their part in this tragedy, as so often happens.

In 3 cases wives murdered their husbands. If this seems a large percentage, it must be remembered that in no fewer than 18 cases did husbands murder their wives. Tati Hirma had three wives. One was dead and the other two were living at the time of the tragedy. The youngest wife Mase was frequently beaten by her husband who said she did not work properly and ate too much. Their constant quarrels attracted the notice of the villagers, and a panchayat was held which fined them four annas each. One day in January 1940, when the two wives were reaping the rice crop together, their husband went to the field and beat Mase. Late that night when everyone was asleep, the girl got

up and killed her husband with an axe. The injuries were severe. There were several fractures in the skull, the face was fractured and the brain congested. The Court found that the girl had received great provocation, her body had many marks of injuries and it was shown that sometimes she was so severely beaten that her whole body would be swollen, and she would have to foment her injuries with hot water. She had a baby only five months old, and so she was given the terrible mercy of life-imprisonment.

The murder of Tati Mundra by his wife Pande was also due to constant and cruel ill-treatment. Mundra was not her first husband, who deserted her and went to the Tea Gardens. She came to Mundra of her own accord, and lived with him happily for about a year and a half. Then her daughter by her previous husband died, and she began to go on visits to other villages. On each occasion Mundra had to follow her and bring her home by force. He used to beat her mercilessly and rub the juice of the marking nut (*Semicarpus anacardium*) into her wounds. This juice is a strong irritant and when applied to the skin desiccates strongly and raises black blisters. At the time of the trial, several months after the tragedy, these blisters were clearly visible on Pande's body. At last she could bear this ill-treatment no longer. The final cause of exasperation was when Mundra proposed one day to take her for treatment to a Siraha to exorcize the evil spirit of wandering that possessed her. That night he forcibly tried to have intercourse with her, but she refused. Both remained awake in order to see that the other did no mischief. But at last Mundra fell asleep and the girl killed him with an axe.

Far less justifiable was the action taken by Mase who, with the help of her lover Marvi Boti, murdered her husband Bododi and his son by giving them powdered oleander seeds in their food. Bododi was a Siraha and had no other means of livelihood. This did not please Mase who was a woman of big ideas, and she formed an attachment for Boti who stood to her in the privileged relation of husband's younger 'brother.' There were many quarrels between her and her husband, she abusing him for doing no work and he scolding her for her relations with Boti. Boti and Mase were actually caught while coming out of a maize field at night, and it is said that Boti had intercourse with Mase in her own husband's house.

Boti knew that oleander seeds were poisonous to pigs and it is probable that he gave these to the woman so that they could get rid of the inconvenient husband and he could keep her as his wife after his death. Bododi and his younger brother died in agony.

## XVIII

## CRIMINAL LUNACY

Criminal lunacy is not a serious problem in Bastar. During the 22 years from 1919 to 1941, only 8 criminal lunatics were sent to the Mental Hospital at Nagpur. 2 of the 8 were released cured, and 6 remained. More recently from 1935 to 1941, 17 persons were examined for insanity in the jail at Jagdalpur. 5 of these, all murderers, were sent to Nagpur; 5 were found to be falsely pleading insanity and were convicted of violent crime; 1 was found to have committed a murder while insane, but was released as cured in 1937. The others were sent in for observation as harmless lunatics under the provisions of the Lunacy Act.

Of the 6 criminal lunatics sent to Nagpur, only 2 were Bison-horn Marias. But in 2 other cases Bison-horn Marias who were convicted of homicide under Section 304 showed marked psychotic characteristics.

Marvi Bhima was a melancholic and murdered his wife in a fit of manic-depressive insanity. For two days before the tragedy he had behaved very strangely, walking in and out of the house and going round and round it; and it was actually while the relatives were calling the village elders to deal with the matter that he went into his house and stabbed his younger wife Kondi in the stomach with an arrow. After stabbing her he tried to pull the arrow out, but finding this difficult he pushed it right through her body and removed it from the back. In the meantime the village elders were on the way to the house, and when they got there they saw Bhima wandering about with a bow and arrow in his hand. They sent the unfortunate woman to the police station where she died while making a dying declaration. No one dared to go near Bhima. But the next morning he went into a neighbour's house and they hastily closed the door and bolted it from outside. When the headman got there, he found Bhima hiding inside a large bamboo bin used for storing grain. The villagers kept him locked up until the police came and took him away.

Before the Court Bhima admitted stabbing his wife, but declared that he did not properly remember why he did so. Everybody testified to the fact that he had been very fond of Kondi and had always treated her well, though for the whole year his behaviour had been strange. After the murder he showed no sign of realising what he had done, and during his trial he wept not because he had killed his wife, but because he feared 'that in his absence his cattle were being distributed like fowls.' He tried to escape from the Court two or three times during the trial, for he was filled with fear that he would be thrown into a pit, and

begged the Judge that he might be hanged or given any imprisonment so long as he was not thrown into the pit. The medical evidence was that Bhima was suffering from melancholia. He was acquitted of the charge of murder, but was detained under Section 471 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

'The periodic mental disorders of epilepsy' says Sullivan, 'are divisible, according to their relation to the characteristic paroxysms, into those preceding the fit, or pre-epileptic disorders; usually in the direction of morbid irritability, those following the fit—post-epileptic dream-states or maniacal outbursts of longer or shorter duration—and those occurring in lieu of a fit, or possibly after a very slight and unobserved attack of *petit mal*. Criminal conduct, and particularly acts of homicidal violence—for homicide is par excellence the crime of the epileptic—may occur in connection with any of these disordered conditions. Its most frequent and characteristic form is the homicide committed in the phase of obscured consciousness which may follow or replace a fit or an attack of epileptic vertigo.' <sup>1</sup>

Hemla Chewa was an epileptic, and his left hand was a fingerless stump. On January 18th 1922 as he was going through the jungle near Hirana, he met a Halba boy about sixteen years old who was cutting fire-wood. He has never seen the boy before and there was no suggestion that he had any relations with him. In the Court he gave a story of being chased through the forest by three men and that as he was running away he met the boy and seized his axe and killed him with it. Later the same evening he assaulted and injured a woman with his axe, and hit her nephew when he ran to her assistance. Chewa was tied up by the villagers but escaped during the night, and went to his uncle's house in the same village. The next morning he was again caught and taken to the police. In the Court he showed complete indifference to his trial, and talked throughout in a low tone. He gave an impression of idiocy and was acquitted of murder, but was detained in jail as a lunatic.

Another epileptic who exhibited the characteristic signs of obscured consciousness and amnesia was an elderly man named Khotlu who killed his wife Mase on the evening of December 12th, 1920 at Kawadgaon. Khotlu was an epileptic and for a year before the tragedy he had been getting attacks every Sunday. He used to shiver uncontrollably, froth at the mouth, suffer violent convulsions and fall to the ground unconscious for two or three hours. At such times he had the delusion that a rebellion was about to take place and would call on everyone to run away. Sometimes he himself armed with a stick would run into the jungle.

<sup>1</sup> Sullivan, op. cit., p. 133.

On two occasions he had to be tied up, and was taken first to Torwa and then to Pondum to be treated by medicine-men.

Khotlu's wife Mase was nearly as old as himself, and had borne him ten children. They were apparently on the best of terms. But on the day of the tragedy, which was a Sunday, when they went out with their little boy to cut the kosra crop in their fields, he fell in a fit. After lying unconscious for some hours he got up and shouted 'Run, run, the Bhumkal (rebellion) is coming.' He told his wife to go home at once. But she said that their work was not finished and she would first pick some leaves and then come. Khotlu accused her of being in love with someone and wanting to meet him in the forest. At that she agreed to go with him. Khotlu began to push her along and as she was walking home before him, he shot her with an arrow from behind.

The woman somehow reached the village, and died three days later. Khotlu stayed out in the fields and in the evening came and sat in his house. When he was asked the following day where his wife was, he said she had gone to fetch water. Presently he pointed at something and said that it was his wife coming. When he was taken to see the dying woman, at first he declared that she was not his wife at all, then later insisted that he had no recollection of the incident.

The case of Poyami Kosa is one in which we approach very near to the boundaries of insanity, although the Court considered that he was sufficiently responsible and sentenced him to seven years' imprisonment. He was a man who was regarded as almost imbecile by his fellow Marias. He was incapable of ploughing his fields or of buying things in the bazaar. His wife seems to have treated him as a grown-up child. He suffered from some form of paralysis. On the day of the murder, shortly before sunset, when 'the sun was only three bamboos above the horizon,' Kosa asked his wife to lie with him. But she refused and abused him, taunting him with his illness and saying that he would never get better. He then attempted to have sexual congress with her forcibly, and she resisted. In the struggle her wooden combs and cloth fell to the ground, and Kosa full of rage stabbed her with a small pointed knife on the face and neck. She ran for about forty paces, and then fell dead to the ground.

Kawasi Chamru had at one time suffered from insanity. Five years previously he had a curious fit of madness which lasted several days. On the first day he wandered about the jungle. On the next he climbed up a tree and sat there all day. On the third day he killed two of his bullocks and rubbed their blood on his body. Nothing then happened for several years. But shortly before the tragedy he began to act strangely. He had always





The few cases, therefore, where a Maria homicide has tried to evade the consequences of his crime are of special interest. It cannot be said that the Marias are very expert at concealment. Sometimes they made clumsy attempts to make the murder look like suicide. This was done in each of the 3 throttling cases of 1933. In the first, the murderer after throttling a young boy tied a cloth tightly round his neck, and strung him to a tree. In the next, where according to the medical evidence the murderer strangled a girl with a thin rope, he tied the body to the branch of a tamarind tree, but so carelessly that she was not found hanging but sitting on the ground. In the third, Uji Poda tied a rope round his victim's neck and broke it. He then tied the broken end to the roof of a field-shed and left it dangling, the idea being to suggest that the man had hanged himself, but the rope had snapped and allowed the body to fall on the ground. Poda then bribed everybody to make a report of suicide to the police.

Again, when Poyami Masa stabbed his wife with an arrow, his idea seems to have been to suggest suicide; but unfortunately for him he did not do his work properly and the poor woman lived long enough to tell the villagers the truth of what had happened.

In two other cases the murderers arranged the bodies of their victims to look as though they had been attacked by tigers.

In 3 cases the murderers attempted to hide the body. In one, the concealment was done so clumsily that marks of blood and every trace of a violent crime was left on the scene of the crime. In another case an attempt was made to suggest that the deceased had met a natural death by drowning, and in another report was made that the dead man was an epileptic and had killed himself by falling in a fit on to a stump of wood.

The Marias' attempts to put their crimes on to innocent people are less discreditable than they appear. The idea seems to be that, if an obviously innocent person is accused, he will be able to clear himself in Court, and the police may then drop their investigation and both the innocent and guilty will escape. In 1940, in a village near Aranpur a man was arrested for shooting someone with an arrow, and the prosecution witnesses actually testified that they saw him do so. He denied the crime, and presently another man went to the police and confessed that he was the real culprit. But there was no evidence against the second man and both persons were acquitted. The following year at Aranpur when Barse Chewa was arrested for the murder of his father-in-law, his relatives tried to involve Chewa's brother in the case. They declared that the brother had gone to a medicine-man, and had asked him to perform sacrifices which would

protect him from the consequences of the crime of which he was the real culprit. It was easily proved, however, that he could have had nothing to do with the matter, and it is probable that the Aranpur people were hoping by this trick to secure the release of both the brothers. This will explain other attempts to involve young men in crimes of which they were obviously innocent. In one case the accused, a youth of only eighteen, tried to involve his brother, though in the end he admitted his crime before the Court. In another, the villagers tried to force a young man to admit the crime and the youth's father actually took him to the police station. The Sub-Inspector, however, refused to accept his confession.

But in the Gumiapal murder, where the real murderer was the Pujari of the village, the people combined to protect their priest and put the blame on an innocent man. They forced the Kotwar to implicate him and make a false report. When I met the murderer fourteen years afterwards in jail, he was still insisting on his innocence and that the real murderer was the man whom he had tried to implicate so many years before.

But these attempts to shift responsibility are uncommon. It is remarkable how quickly, once the police have arrived on the scene, a Maria admits his guilt, and in 81 of our 100 cases such confession was made.

## XX

### THE ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY: CO-OPERATION WITH THE POLICE

In the old days it was probably the universal custom for the villagers to try cases of homicide on the spot, and to demand suitable compensation. Somewhat later it was the custom to make compensation to the local authorities. In fact, the older Marias still remember how in the days of their grandparents compensation for murder was paid to the Jia of Dantewara or to the Nengi and Hikmi at Mailawada. A very old man at Harmamunda described how, 'In the old days when a witch was caught, her hands were cut off; and she was taken to the Nengi and Hikmi who were paid eight female calves. If a man was found practising black-magic, his teeth were first knocked out with a large bone, and then the bone itself was pushed into his mouth until he died.' The idea was that he had done his evil with the purpose of 'eating' or gain and so he was given a bone to eat. When this happened, the Nengi and Hikmi received eight male calves. 'Sometimes the witch or sorcerer had all their teeth knocked out, their mouths were burnt with hot oil, and they were banished from their village.

With this mark upon them no one would shelter them. Yet another method of dealing with a witch was to tie her up in a sack and throw her into the river.'

An old man at Dhurli described how his brother had been killed by a witch's magic. When the Waddai confirmed this, his father killed the witch and paid compensation of four female calves to the Jia.

There are probably many cases never discovered by the police that are settled by the Maria panchayats. In others after everything had been settled by the panchayat, the police detected the crime. There were only 12 such cases out of 100. But they are instructive. For example, when Mundra killed his wife the villagers fined him a feast of rice and a calf, and then assisted him in cremating the corpse. When Koliha killed Bondki, the wife of Dasru, a panchayat was held by the Pargana Manjhi and the husband of the murdered woman was given five rupees, a bullock, a pig and some rice. The panchayat received twenty rupees of which the Pargana Manjhi and the village Peda took five each, the Kandki (headman's assistant) four and the Kotwar one. The villagers then decided to hush up the incident, and it only came to the ears of the police through an informer. When Kartami Hirma killed his baby daughter while he was beating his wife, the panchayat demanded a fine of twenty-five rupees in consideration of which they agreed to hush the matter up. The accused paid five rupees on account and promised the rest within a month. The panchayat even seized the stick with which the beating had been done. Then the Kotwar reported that the child has been still-born.

When Poyami Handa was killed, the villagers forced his widow to accept compensation from the murderer, and to keep the matter a secret. But she told what had happened to her brother-in-law, and he reported the matter to the police. In another case a group of men who had been involved in a robbery killed two of their number to prevent them giving them away. The headman was the cousin of one of the murderers. He called the people of the village together and persuaded them to agree to say nothing about what had happened, and it was only through the efforts of the father of one of the victims that the matter came to light. Even then the headman attempted to bribe the police. In this case the only reason for concealment seems to have been the friendship of the headman for one of the people involved. A similar reason seems to have influenced the villagers in another murder. When Miriyami Harma fell into a rage at being accused of theft at a panchayat, he pulled his baby daughter out of the arms of his wife

and holding her by the legs dashed her on the ground, killing her immediately. Possibly the members of the panchayat feared that they would be involved, and the next day the murderer and the Kotwar went to the police station and reported that the child had been bitten by a cobra.

Where the murderer is a man of influence in the village such as the Manjhi or Peda (headman) or the Siraha (magician), he may attempt to force the people to conceal his crime. Manjhi Banda was the Peda of the village, and he said that it was his own brother he had killed and it was nobody else's affair. He even forbade the ferrymen to take the body across the Indrawati, and had it buried himself. It is probable that the villagers were influenced by the circumstances of the case. The murder occurred as a result of the quarrel about the partition of the family property which the dead man demanded. But local opinion seems to have been that, since the two brothers were married to two sisters and were thus practically one family of which the elder brother was the patriarchal head, the dead man was wrong in demanding a separate share. Ujji Poda was a well-to-do man and persuaded the villagers to make a false report to the police. Here too there was probably a general belief that Poda had acted rightly in killing the man who had interfered with his wife's chastity. When Gunda was killed by his son, the villagers hushed up the matter partly because the murdered man was the clan priest of the Hemla Clan, and his son automatically succeeded him, and partly because of the justifiable nature of the crime. Even the Court considered the murder so justified that it awarded a sentence of only one month's imprisonment. In another case the murderer so terrorized the village that nobody dared to go to report the crime. At first the villagers refused to cremate the corpse. But the murderer threatened to kill the headman and burn him with the corpse, and insisted upon it being cremated. It was only after a week that the Peda was able to slip out of the village and make a report.

In one case, but only one, a prosecution witness was so troubled by his family that he committed suicide. On the whole, however, the Marias appear to co-operate with the police very well. In 88 cases out of 100 they assisted in some way or other. Some times they reported the matter at the police station. Sometimes they themselves arrested the murderer and kept him in custody until the police arrived. They co-operated by assisting at the inquest which is held in a village when the police arrive to investigate a suspicious death. In one case the villagers took an active and dangerous part in pursuing a convict who had escaped from jail with the result that one of their number was killed.

## TABLE FOURTEEN

*Illustrating the kind of assistance given to police in 100 cases*


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Information withheld from police .. ..	12
Homicide reported by villagers .. ..	79
Accused arrested by villagers .. ..	25
Accused gives himself up to police .. ..	9

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The Bastar police are intelligent and sympathetic. It is greatly to their credit that they have succeeded in persuading a tribe like the Bison-horn Marias to so high a degree of co-operation. Gradually the Marias are learning to understand the meaning of the state and public security; in this the Bastar police have played an important part.

## XXI

## THE ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY: THE DANGER OF QUARRELS

Throughout Bastar there is a firm belief in the danger of quarreling which disturbs tribal solidarity, and earns the vengeance of the gods. If husband and wife are known to be constantly at odds with one another, a panchayat may be held and one or both may be fined. Where adultery has been discovered it is very important that a ceremony of purification and protection should be held, for on the woman's side many kinds of misfortune may befall her household and family: the cattle will be devoured by wild animals, people may go blind, children may die. It is said that the reason for this is that the ancestors of the woman are defiled or angered by her conduct; and they cause trouble to show that they must be appeased by the proper offerings. The deceived husband also suffers. His arrow will not fly straight in the ceremonial hunt. If he is a magician, his vision will be clouded. If the proper ceremonies are not performed, he may be afflicted with a watery swelling of his body which terminates in death.

If a murder is committed on account of adultery, the families both of the murderer and his victim may suffer from this swelling. To prevent the danger, the elders of each house gather together; they mix milk and water in a leaf-cup of mahua leaves saying, 'These sinned; but let not their sin be on us.' Then a representative of each house drinks a little. The family of the murdered man gives what is called in Halbi *bhul-karcha* to the family of the murderer. A measure of rice is put under the eaves of the house of the murdered man. In the rice there is placed some thread, a ring and an arrow. The two families feast together on pork

and rice, and swear friendship with each other. The arrow remains as witness to their oath. Then the murderer's family take the *bhul-karcha* home, and offer it to the Departed in their house.

The relationship between the families of a murderer and his victim is indeed always a delicate one, and Frazer has collected many examples from all over the world in illustration. The Uraons make sacrifices to the angry ghost of a murdered man, and sometimes even reckon him among the ancestral spirits of a murderer. Roy records that two Uraons, related to each other as cousins, had a quarrel over a piece of land; and one of them, in a sudden fit of anger, thrust his axe into the bowels of the other man. The man, thus struck, at once ran to his assailant's house and, pressing his wounded stomach with his hands, sat down at one corner of the hut and exclaimed, 'Here I establish myself,' and then ran out again to the field in dispute and dropped down dead. To this day, the descendants of the murderer propitiate the murdered man's spirit. After the harvest, the first sheaf of paddy from the field on to which he dropped down dead is offered to the spirit of the murdered man at the same corner of the house where he sat down before his death. The descendants of the murdered man too are allowed access to the same spot for making similar offerings.<sup>1</sup>

I have not found this custom in Bastar, though that does not mean that it does not exist. But I have found everywhere an anxiety that there should not be any enmity or grudge between the families. Compensation is often paid to the victim's widow or family, and the murderer's family may contribute to the expenses of the funeral. Both families should always have a feast together. In Gamawada the family of an imprisoned murderer gave every kind of help to the relatives of his victim.

## XXII

### THE ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY : BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS THE RELEASED CONVICT

When a murderer comes out of jail, before he is admitted to the ordinary privileges of tribal life and sometimes even before he is allowed to enter his house, ceremonies of purification must be performed. These are of two kinds. The first is a straightforward ceremony to purge a man from the defilement of having been in jail and in the hands of the police. This is probably a Hindu idea, and is connected with the fact that in jail prisoners must take food from members of any caste. It is likely that they may be beaten by constables, who again may be men of

<sup>1</sup> S. C. Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs* (Ranchi, 1928), pp. 69 f.

low caste, and they are almost certainly forced at some time to wear handcuffs which is regarded by most Hindus as degrading. A term of imprisonment is, of course, culture-contact in its most concentrated form, and we need not be surprised to find aboriginal prisoners bringing back from the capital of the State Hindu notions of this kind.

The ceremony, it is interesting to note, bears no relationship at all to the kind of crime that has been committed. For stealing a cow or illicit distilling of mahua liquor a man has to undergo the same purification as if he had committed a brutal murder.

The ceremonies vary from place to place. At Jabeli, where they have had a lot of experience of this sort of thing, they told me that when a man returns from jail he is not at first allowed to enter his house, but must remain outside and the family gives him his food at a distance. He must then go to his Waddai and give him five rupees for some of the water in which his Clan God has been bathed. The priest sprinkles him with this and gives him a little to drink. He sprinkles some of it over the house. Then the released prisoner gives a feast of beef or pork to the village, he is allowed to go into his house, and from that day 'everybody forgets all about it.'

Sometimes the water must be brought from Dantewara. Hemla Bakka, for example, had to get water from the Jia in which the Goddess Danteshwari had been bathed. When Doga came out of jail, the Perma heated a bit of gold in the fire and touched his forehead, mouth, wrists, knees and toes. He dipped the gold in water and sprinkled it over the body. In Pogu Bheji, the priest burnt with a bit of gold the murderer's tongue, the back of his neck and the upper part of his left arm. He made a fire above the bit of gold with branches of the mango, dumar, karanji and mahua trees and sprinkled the hot ashes over his head. Then the people washed him with ghee, milk and haldi water. When he had given a feast he was free of the contagion of the jail.

When Nendi Muya of Dhanikarka was flogged for stealing a cow, he had to sacrifice a pig and a white chicken to Nati Deo, and bring water from the shrine of Lakshmi Devi at Kuakonda. When Telami Dhurwa returned from jail after killing a man in a drunken quarrel, he had to offer his clan god, Uru Maru, a pig, a cow and a hen; and had to undergo the usual ceremonies of purification.

Apart from these ceremonies, however, the fact that a man has served a sentence for murder has singularly little influence on his social position and domestic happiness. It is true that imprisonment, if it is for a very long term, sometimes acts as an



automatic divorce, and women feel that they are at liberty to marry again. But generally wives wait for their husbands to be released, as I found Deve, the wife of Kawasi Borga, waiting for her husband at Doriras. Borga, ten years before, had killed his uncle with a log snatched from the fire while they were disputing with each other over the title to a field. His wife had all the time been well looked after by the villagers, and I found her house substantial and prosperous. Her two sons had been successfully married and were carrying on the business of their home with the help of their wives.

People, however, are sometimes afraid to marry a released murderer. Doga of Jabeli must be one of the luckiest young men alive, for after being sentenced for twenty years for one murder was released after three years; whereupon he killed his wife, was sentenced to death and again got off on appeal. He came to see me armed with a ferocious looking axe, which had actually been put in evidence at one of his trials as the weapon with which he had committed murder. He was trying to get a new wife, but without success. 'They are all afraid of me,' he said, 'for fear I might kill them as well.' But he thought he might possibly get a widow. Another youth who found it very difficult to get a new wife was Hemla Bakka, who killed his wife for committing adultery, and got three years' imprisonment for it. At Arampur all the girls were frightened of the charming Gutte, who had been in jail for killing a man in a drunken quarrel after a cock-fight. They thought if they displeased him, he might murder them too.

At Kutapal, Oyami Masa who was imprisoned for killing his junior wife, seems to have suffered no loss of prestige on account of it. He is a Waddai, and when I was there he went over to Tikanpal to offer sacrifice on behalf of that village.

At Muler I visited the widow of Ido Deva, an unpleasant quarrelsome fellow who had recently been hanged for murdering one of the most popular men in the village. In spite of this, his widow was well treated. She was not excommunicate and was allowed to share in the usual feasts. But she always remains inside her house, and generally refuses to talk to people; and the headman told me that there would probably be some difficulty in getting her two sons married, for people would say, 'After all, their father was a murderer.'

### XXIII

#### THE ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY : BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS THE DEAD

The reaction of society to violent crime can be seen from the funerary arrangements made both for the homicide and his victim.

In the great majority of cases these arrangements are complicated by the fact that the corpses of the deceased are not available. They are generally taken to headquarters for post-mortem examination, and when a man is hanged in jail his body is disposed of by the prison authorities. This does not mean, however, that the funeral ceremonies are not performed. Clothes and other properties belonging to the dead are brought back from the Magistrate's Court or from the jail, and these are used to represent the corpse. When Markami Deva killed his wife at Darbha the people brought her clothes, necklace and armlets to the village. These things were not brought into the house, but were put outside in the yard. The usual funeral drum was not beaten, but the relatives gathered and the brother of the husband (the husband himself was in police custody) put haldi and oil on the things, and a relative by marriage carried them in a basket to where a pyre had been prepared outside the village. Men and women walked behind throwing seeds of rice, maize and pulse mixed together on the basket.

The pyre was under a tree over which a siari creeper was growing. They carried the basket round it seven times. Relatives put small pieces of cloth upon it in the usual way and removed them. They hung a bit of cloth on a tree near by. Then they lit the pyre and went away. They did not erect an uraskal, though here they said that they would have done so if they had been able to afford it. When Doga of Jabeli killed his wife, but was acquitted on appeal, no ceremony was performed for the dead woman at the time. But when Doga returned home, he himself made a small pyre and carried his wife's clothes and ornaments in his own hands, and thus performed the usual ceremonies.

The day after the burning of the pyre two men go to inspect the ashes. When Oyami Anda was hanged they found 'signs of hanging'—the marks of a rope—among the ashes.

The funeral drum is not beaten at the ceremonies of a man who is hanged, or of his victim or when somebody commits suicide. Otherwise the ceremonies are largely the same.

After Kaddi Hunga was hanged for murdering the boy Markami Dorga, the clothes of both murderer and victim were put together and covered with earth, and a small pillar of semur wood was erected near by.

Sometimes the dead man's clothes are not brought to the house, but are kept outside the village for fear that they may bring the angry ghost along with them. At Killepal and other villages it was the custom to burn the clothes at a cross-roads outside the village.

In the Konta Tahsil to the south I found a slightly different custom. For example, at Muler when Ido Deva was hanged, the people did not fetch his clothes from the jail, perhaps because it was so far away. But when they got the news of his death, they cut a bit of a gongum tree and dressed it with cloth, earrings and a necklace as if it were a man. They laid it on a bier, covered it with cloth and took it round the pyre three times. Then they erected a forked saja pole, and after sacrificing a cow tied the tail to the fork. This is the usual practice in this area. At Gandarguda I visited the place where Rawa Hirma's clothes had been burnt. Hirma had been murdered during a quarrel about a debt. Here too a bit of the gongum tree had been decorated to represent the dead man, and it was carried out and burnt in the place where all the members of his clan were cremated.

Sometimes the corpse is cremated near the menhirs. At Aranpur I saw a large pile of ashes and half-burnt logs of wood in front of the uraskal-stone erected in memory of members of the Barse clan. These were the remains of the pyre of Barse Chewa who had recently been hanged. In this case it was considered of ill omen that, although two attempts were made to burn the pyre, a lot of the wood remained unburnt. In other villages, however, we were told that such ceremonies must not be performed in the neighbourhood of the menhirs.

There seems to be no objection to erecting an uraskal or danyakal stone either for murderers or for their victims. At Palnar an uraskal was placed for Mulami Bella. At Dugeli an uraskal was placed for a murdered man. In other villages such as Matapal (where there is no uraskal for Banjami Irma who was murdered by his own son) or at Gandarguda (where there is no danyakal for Rawa Hirma) the absence of these memorials is said to be due to the fact that the deceased were poor men and their relatives could not afford them. But at Dugeli, Kunjami Pandu told us that an uraskal for a murdered man can only be erected after the case against the murderer is settled. When his own brother was murdered, he did not at first erect a stone for him, and he was continually troubled by the restless ghost who came in dreams to reproach him for not 'mingling his soul with the dead, and for his failure to give him a stone.' Once Pandu did this, he had no more bad dreams.

The ceremonies of erecting a menhir for a murderer are exactly the same as for anyone else. When the villagers were carrying the stone for Mulami Bella at Palnar, they halted and put it on the ground, and the woman of the house threw rings on to it. Afterwards the women eagerly collected these rings, for it is considered very lucky to wear them.

On the forest road between Palnar and Jabeli there is a row of the flat memorial stones called danyakal, and at one end a tall-carved wooden pillar and a large earthen tomb. The tomb, the pillar and one of the stones is in honour of Marvi Oyami Masa who died in jail while serving a sentence for the murder of his uncle. Masa was a very important man in Jabeli. He was rich, he was the Waddai of the village and he was a Siraha medicine man. His death seemed to be far more important to the villagers than that of the man he murdered. The stone next to his is for Marvi Buta who was also sentenced for this murder and so died in jail. But there was nothing at all in memory of the murdered man.

The erection of a carved memorial pillar is probably the greatest honour that the Marias can pay to the dead. It is the equivalent of being buried in Westminster Abbey. Masa's pillar is a very fine one. It shows him as a Siraha sitting on a swing. A streamer of untidy hair blows out from his head. Another carving shows him mounted on an elephant. Another portrays him riding on a horse attended by his wives. All round him are the symbols of his life; deer and tigers represent his love of the chase; axes, swords and knives symbolize his valour and enterprise; two men carry a pot of landa in memory of his drinking prowess.

The business of keeping the ghost of the murderer or his victim quiet naturally greatly exercises the minds of the village medicine-men and priests. There is danger either that the ghost will cause trouble among the other ghosts of the family, and thus by annoying the ancestors bring trouble upon the living: or it may inspire another member of the family also to commit a murder; or it may return and simply make itself troublesome. At Phulpar, after Pandu had been hanged and the usual ceremonies performed, the village priest sacrificed a hen near the pyre saying, 'Now we make your home here: live here with your ancestors peacefully.' If they fail to do this, they said, they think someone else in the house will also commit a murder. Then they erected a saja pole and after sacrificing a cow to appease the ghost of the dead man, each relative in turn picked up the cow's tail and greeted it, and then hung it on the pole. The Waddai went to a corner of the room where the Pot of the Departed was kept, sprinkled liquor there and addressed the ghost: 'Live now with your sons. Do not go to your daughters. Care for the people of your house. See that your children prosper.'

Often after the ceremony of burning the clothes and ornaments, a man sits in the house of the deceased and the ghost comes upon him. He is led out to the pyre, and there he buries a *bhut hukri*, a ghost hen, in order to ensure that the ghost will not come to the house and trouble its relatives.

The ghost of the murderer or his victim becomes a Mirchuk which lives in a mahua tree. Sometimes it is supposed that this Mirchuk possesses a man and makes him commit a murder. At Godra, when Kawachi Linga returned from jail after serving a homicide sentence, a black chicken was sacrificed to the Mirchuk of his victim. But the chicken refused to eat the rice that is always offered to it before it is killed, and the people thought that this meant that Linga would be possessed by the spirit of his first victim and thus would be driven to commit another murder. To avert this danger they sacrificed a pig and a cow, and only then readmitted him to their society.

The Mirchuk is very quarrelsome, and so the spirit of a man who has been hanged must not be mingled with the other ancestors in the Room of the Departed, for it is sure to cause trouble. So the Mirchuk is generally located outside the village under a large stone or in an ant-hill. At Dhurli we were told that when Telami Hunga was murdered his ghost was kept apart, for he was a student of magic and such persons turn into Rao Bhut. For such no uraskal should be erected, nor should the ghost be mingled with the other Departed.

Indeed it is often held that the ghosts of the slain and of executed criminals should not be 'mingled with the Departed' and nothing should be put for them in the sacred Pot in the ordinary way.<sup>1</sup> When the boy Ando was murdered by his uncle Irma, this precaution was taken. Ando's ghost still roams the village, an axe in its hands, seeking vengeance. Irma's ghost is said to have possessed itself of the rope with which he was hanged and he may use it to hang the other Departed of his clan or to steal their cows.

It is very dangerous for a murderer to see the ghost of his victim while he is in jail, perhaps because it is impossible there to perform the proper ceremonies of protection. Pandu of Chichari described how this happened to three of his fellow-prisoners and they all died. Boti of Telam suffered a similar visitation and was ill for a whole year.

In several places I found that a house or a village had been moved from its original site after a murder had been committed there. At Arampur, for example, the house in which Chewa killed his father-in-law was destroyed, and a new house was built else-

<sup>1</sup> Mateer reported that in Travancore the ghosts of executed murderers were regarded as specially dangerous and were believed to haunt the place of execution. To prevent this the executioner used to cut off the criminal's heels with a sword or hamstring him as he was thrown off. S. MATEER, *The Land of Charity* (London, 1871), pp. 203 f.

where for the widow and other members of the family. At Doriras the whole village was shifted from its former site in the year following the murder of Kawasi Boti. Muler village also was shifted after the murder of Rawa Harma.

## XXIV

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about these crimes is their astonishing innocence. Compared to the dark and complicated wickedness of so many European murders, compared to the fundamental savagery of the actions of such men as Palmer or Orsini, most of these crimes appear almost accidental. In some cases the culprit regards himself as an executioner rather than a murderer. He believes his act to have been entirely justified. In others simple people despairing of making their cause understood in the courts, which use another language and whose ways and outlook are so different from theirs, take the law into their own hands. But of criminals, in the real sense of the word, there are few. Few of the convicts in the Jagdalpur Jail would be fit heroes or villains of a detective story.

No one should suppose that, because this article is entirely concerned with violent crime, the Maria themselves are equally preoccupied with the subject. There are a great many Maria, at least 175,000 of them. They live scattered over a vast area half the size of Holland. There are on an average only 12 true homicides every year. The great majority of the people live quiet, peaceful, hardworking lives. Even on the most uncharitable evaluation, their addition to violence is only remarkable when compared to their immediate neighbours, who are some of the most pacific and gentle people on this planet. It is no doubt true that the Maria are jealous, quick-tempered, passionate, revengeful. Their faults and their virtues are those of strength, not of weakness. It is from such a tribe that we might look one day for creative genius, for positive, explosive, advanced ideas.

It is sometimes debated in Bastar whether anything can be done to wean the Maria from violence. I doubt it. For example, an important cause of murder is fear of witchcraft and magic. Eliminate this fear, and the number of murders will decrease. But the belief in witchcraft can only be removed by education. And how is the Maria to receive the kind of education that will achieve this end? Even if schools were opened all over suthern Bastar, they would only be little village schools which would teach up to an elementary standard and be staffed by schoolmasters themselves semi-educated. In the last ten years I have had a

wide experience of village schoolmasters, and I do not know a single one who does not believe in magic and witchcraft as firmly as any aboriginal. Those acquainted with the small towns of central India will agree that even university graduates and men holding responsible positions in government service are equally affected by this belief. Education, in fact, would do nothing to lessen the fear of witchcraft. It might, on the other hand, stimulate other kinds of crime. Not a few educated aboriginals take to blackmail, impersonation and cheating once they have gained the power that literacy gives them.

Another important cause of homicide is alcohol. Suppose prohibition was introduced. Would this reduce the amount of violent crime? I think it most unlikely. In the first place the Maria, angry and resentful, would tend to co-operate less and less with the State in preserving law and order. Illicit distillation would begin everywhere. The brewing of rice-beer, which can be done in the secret part of a house, would be very difficult to detect. An endless procession of short-term prisoners convicted for excise offences would come from Jagdalpur to infect the Maria area with criminal ideas picked up from other prisoners.

Jealousy and the desire for revenge is probably the third most important cause of murder. I know of no method by which these passions can be eradicated from the human heart. It must, however, be remembered that Maria jealousy is the great safeguard of the Maria home. The women are chaste and faithful not only because most aboriginal women at this stage of development are so, but because of the terrible danger of infidelity. When we move to the more gentle tribesmen of Mandla or Bilaspur we find little jealousy and very few murders, but a woeful lack of attachment to the marriage bond and a marked indifference to female chastity.

Propaganda by State officials on tour designed to impress upon the Maria the value of human life and the wrong of taking it; some means of making the civil courts more readily accessible in order to remove from the tribesmen the temptation to take the law into their own hands; and special attempts at the annual Dassara Festival, when thousands of Maria come in to Jagdalpur to honour the Maharaja, to influence the headmen to set their face against violence; would probably improve the situation a little.

How far would deterrent measures influence the Maria? Comparatively few death sentences are passed or executed. Out of 117 persons convicted on my list, only 21 were sentenced to death and only 18 were hanged, although 75 were convicted of actual murder under Section 302. If the death sentence were

imposed more frequently, would it deter the Maria from murder? When I have discussed this with the people themselves, they have declared that it would not. They say that they commit murder for only two reasons. The first is accidental, when they are drunk or when they give someone a beating without intending to kill and the victim dies on their hands. The second is when a man is driven to such despair that he decides to destroy his enemy and himself at the same time. Here murder becomes a sort of suicide. But the people think, and probably rightly, that in neither of these cases would fear of the death penalty have any effect. I myself would not venture on an opinion. But I think that, if the death penalty is to be given at all, it should be given consistently and that wherever a premeditated murder has been proved, it should follow as a matter of course. In some villages, the Maria suggested that the headman and Kotwar should be very severely punished whenever they fail to report an act of violence. So long as the people think that they can kill and then by paying compensation to the panchayat can avoid punishment, there is definite encouragement to crime.

But in the main I think the Bastar tradition, which is merciful and lenient, is wise. Indeed Sir Cecil Walsh discussing certain violent criminals in the United Provinces goes so far as to say that 'I have sometimes wondered whether such men ought to be punished at all, beyond being bound over to keep the peace. If three stalwart and useful cultivators happen to lose their lives in a sudden village fight, those who caused the deaths are generally guilty of murder, but it seems harsh and uneconomic to hang three more, to send another six to transportation for life, and to break up and ruin several homes. Of course, the magistracy, which enjoys a good deal of control over the police, is responsible for the peace of the district, and a magistrate who did not take the only steps open to him under the codes to punish such disorder and destruction of life would be transferred, and probably black-marked. "Grievous hurt," which includes knocking out a tooth and involves severe, rigorous imprisonment, the equivalent of hard labour, is almost invariably inflicted. It has always seemed to me that these cases are punished with terrible severity. There is certainly no relation between the moral gravity of the offence and the punishment usually awarded, and imprisonment is absolutely no deterrent, so that severity loses much of its value. Personally, I tried to treat these cases when they came before me on appeal with leniency, and went out of my way to encourage others to do likewise I think this principle is sound, though it has no application to deliberate brutality, which, in England, used to be treated too lightly. But the point is, as it seems to me, that the presence amongst criminal statistics of these cases of loss of self-



control in sudden quarrels between illiterate people is misleading to anyone who seeks to draw an inference from figures in an attempt to form an opinion of the criminal instincts and tendencies of a community.'<sup>1</sup>

Throughout India there is urgent need for reform in the treatment of the aboriginal prisoner. There will have to be, of course, the most drastic and far reaching changes before the present penal system of India is brought into line with that of civilized administrations. But I suggest that the aboriginals here as everywhere present a rather special problem and might be considered separately.

In jail the aboriginal, suffers in acute and subtle ways. His ordinary life is so free; his needs are so few and simple, yet always fulfilled; his life depends so entirely on certain stimulants to existence that without them he quickly loses the desire to live and, even though he survives his sentence, he comes out of jail with his faith broken and his soul permanently twisted.

The aboriginal prisoner everywhere has no religious consolation, even on the eve of his execution. He does not even have the emotional outlet that the European prisoner gets from singing hymns in Sunday chapel. Although his life is full of the fear of hostile supernatural beings and of his ancestors who may be deeply offended with him for his crime, he has no means of propitiating them in the proper manner. If he has an ill-omened dream in prison, if a god or ancestor appears to him and makes a demand of him, there is nothing that he can do about it. It would be a good thing, at least in Bastar, if criminals, on the eve of their execution, were allowed to visit the temple of Danteshwari, tutelary goddess of the State, and make a suitable sacrifice to her.

The aboriginal depends greatly on his recreations. These are entirely stopped in jail. In Europe and America the authorities have realized the futility and danger of such a deprivation. Is there no way by which aboriginal prisoners in certain places should be allowed the singing or dancing that is so dear to them?

What is really needed is a special prison for aboriginals only, to which all those with, say, sentences of more than seven years should be sent from every part of India. It should be situated among the hills, and run more as a camp than an ordinary prison. The aboriginals should be taught crafts which will be useful to them after their release, not occupations like weaving which are taboo. They should be given, as far as possible, food to which they are accustomed. If there were only aboriginals, it

<sup>1</sup> SIR CECIL WALSH, *Indian Village Crimes* (London, 1929), p. 12.

would be possible to arrange for their own priests to perform sacrifices at the time of the great festivals and whenever it was necessary to make some private act of propitiation. Regular times could be set apart for corporate singing and for dancing—which incidentally is splendid exercise and which in tribal India takes the place of organized games and physical training. I cannot see the point of depriving long-term aboriginal prisoners of the thing which many of them value as the chief comfort of their hard existence, tobacco. Short-term prisoners should certainly be without it. But for men whose lives are obviously ruined and broken, some concession in this respect could do nothing but good. In any aboriginal prison the rule which makes a convict stand before an official in a penitential attitude, with head bowed and hands held before him, should be abolished. Nothing should be done to make the aboriginal servile and obsequious. His spirit should be re-created, not broken. There is in him a great fund of natural innocence on which to build.

For what great areas of crime and semi-criminal human activity are untouched by these simple aboriginals! Unnatural vice is unknown to them. Rape is extremely rare. Infanticide and abortion is so unusual as to merit special record. They are almost entirely ignorant of cheating and blackmail. They do not tread the mean and devious ways of untruth.

These tribesmen—and it is important to emphasize this for the Marias—do not cheat and exploit the poor and the weak. They are mostly ignorant of caste and race prejudice. They do not prostitute their women or degrade them by foolish laws and customs. They do not form themselves into armies and destroy one another by foul chemical means. They do not tell pompous lies over the radio. Many of their darkest sins are simply the result of ignorance. A few of them are cruel and savage, but the majority are kind and loving, admirable in the home, steadfast in their tribal loyalties, manly, independent, honourable.

# SANTAL MURDERS

By S. M. NAQAVI

## I

The Santals are the largest tribe both of Eastern India and Bihar. At the 1941 census, their numbers in Bihar were 1,534,646 while the next largest tribe, the Uraons, were only 638,490. There are large and important groups of Santals in Hazaribagh, Manbhum and Purnea but the Santal Parganas is their main tribal area, the district where they dominate all other castes and tribes.

In this paper, I have analysed Santal murders in the Santal Parganas during the ten years 1931-40 and have taken for my figures all cases tried under section 302 or 304, I. P. C. Many of these murders were not of special significance and many had no special Santal characteristics. But others were Santal in the sense that no one not a Santal could have committed them. The choice of the manjhithan as site for the murders at Birhamkitta, the witchcraft murders, the affray which took place during the bitlaha—these are murders which presuppose fundamental factors in Santal life; and only when the Santal background is known can these murders be understood.

## II

The first characteristic of Santal murders is their rarity. During the ten years 1931-40, cases of homicide in the district numbered 176 but only 78 were by Santals.

TABLE ONE

*Number of Homicide Cases in the Santal Parganas (under sections 302 and 304 I.P.C.) for 10 years, 1931-40*

	Santals.	Sauria Paharias.	Others.	Total.
1931 .. ..	10	..	7	17
1932 .. ..	6	..	11	17
1933 .. ..	6	2	8	16
1934 .. ..	11	1	10	22
1935 .. ..	10	..	9	19
1936 .. ..	4	3	8	15
1937 .. ..	9	1	11	21
1938 .. ..	5	2	8	15
1939 .. ..	8	2	9	19
1940 .. ..	9	2	4	15
	78	13	85	176

This average of only 7.8 per year is so low that, however catastrophic individual murders may have been, it is obvious that murder itself had little place in Santal life. And its general unimportance will be clear from its incidence to the population.

TABLE TWO

*Illustrating the relation of homicide cases to the population in the Santal Parganas*

	1931.	1941.	Annual average.	Annual average incidence to the million.
Santals .. ..	754,804	798,830	7.8	10.4
Sauria Paharias ..	59,891	57,212	1.3	22
Others .. ..	1,186,344	1,378,455	8.5	8
Total .. ..	2,001,039	2,234,497	17.6	8

## III

This comparative unimportance is further reflected in the judicial decisions and sentences. Out of 78 murders, only 18 were 'technical' murders in the sense that they came under section 302, I.P.C., and in only one case was a Santal actually executed.

TABLE THREE

*Convictions by sections and cases (78)*

Culpable homicide amounting to murder (S. 302, I.P.C.)	18
Culpable homicide not amounting to murder (S. 304, I.P.C.)	26
Grievous hurt (S. 325, I.P.C.) .. ..	8
Simple hurt (S. 323, I.P.C.) .. ..	5
Dacoity with murder (S. 396, I.P.C.) .. ..	1
Insane .. ..	3
Acquitted .. ..	14
Not known .. ..	3

TABLE FOUR  
*Sentences by cases (78)*

Sentenced to death	..	..	..	..	..	2
Transportation for life	..	..	..	..	..	16
Various terms of rigorous imprisonment	..	..	..	..	..	43
Acquitted	..	..	..	..	..	14
Not known	..	..	..	..	..	3

TABLE FIVE  
*Sentences by persons (154)*

Sentenced to death	..	..	..	..	..	2
Transportation for life	..	..	..	..	..	16
Various terms of rigorous imprisonment	..	..	..	..	..	95
Detained as insane	..	..	..	..	..	2
Acquitted	..	..	..	..	..	39

Subsequent analysis may suggest underlying stresses in Santal life out of which murder may easily spring, but it is obvious that only a tribe which is inherently stable and contented could live from year to year with such little fatal violence.

#### IV

#### MURDERS AND VICTIMS.

Out of the 78 cases, almost all Santal murderers were men and almost half of their victims were women.

TABLE SIX  
*Sex Ratio in 75 cases<sup>1</sup>*

	Murderers.	Victims.
Male	145	38 <sup>1</sup>
Female	9	33

<sup>1</sup> Excluding 8 non-Santals.

Most murderers were aged between twenty and forty years while the ages of many victims were between thirty and forty.

In one case, a woman killed her two children in a fit of despair but in far the larger number of cases both the parties were adult.

TABLE SEVEN

*Ages of Murderers by sex*

Age.	Male.	Female.
20 years and under .. .. .	4	1
20—25 .. .. .	21	1
25—30 .. .. .	30	5
30—40 .. .. .	41	..
Over 40 .. .. .	20	2
Not known .. .. .	29	..

<sup>1</sup> Records in three cases not available.

TABLE EIGHT

*Ages of Victims by sex.*

Age.	Male.	Female.
20 years and under .. .. .	3	7
20—25 .. .. .	4	5
25—30 .. .. .	3	5
30—40 .. .. .	19	11
Over 40 .. .. .	6	5
Not known .. .. .	3	..

A significant aspect is that although many Santals live near to non-aboriginals, only four non-aboriginals were murdered. Of these, two were thieves who were caught red-handed, one was a Hindu who had misbehaved with a Santal girl at a market and the fourth had got possession of land which should have gone to a Santal. Besides these non-Santals, four Paharias were also killed. Three of these were caught stealing and the other was killed in a brawl. In all other cases Santals killed Santals.

## SEASONAL VARIATIONS

A relevant factor which may have influenced the murders is season, partly because of climatic changes and partly on account of festivals.

TABLE NINE

*Showing the incidence of Santal homicides by the time of year*

---

January	..	..	..	..	13
February	..	..	..	..	4
March	..	..	..	..	5
April	..	..	..	..	13
May	..	..	..	..	8
June	..	..	..	..	8
July	..	..	..	..	4
August	..	..	..	..	..
September	..	..	..	..	8
October	..	..	..	..	7
November	..	..	..	..	4
December	..	..	..	..	4

---

From this table, it is seen that the peak months are January and April, but next to these May, June and September are high. With the exception of January, all of these months are hot and enervating and climate may well have induced the fatigue, irritation or despair which in certain cases may have underlain the murders. May and June are also 'the hunger months' when the strain of living bulks largely. On the other hand, the high incidence in January is in no way climatic but is due to a general sense of abandon following the harvest. Of the 13 murders committed in January, three occurred during the Sohrae festival, two were sexual and seven were alcoholic. Against these heavy months, it is a curious fact that so far there have been no murders in August. This is the month of transplantation. It is slightly cooler than July and less enervating than September. It is not a month of scarcity, since the maize crop is in, but neither is it a month of plenty, for the rice harvest is still three months away, and there is no very obvious explanation of its strange immunity.

## VI

## TIMES AND METHODS

If there is no fixed season for Santal murders, there is also no fixed time or method. The great majority occurred between mid-day and sun-set, a period when exhaustion from the day's labour is setting in and darkness has not yet obscured the victim from the murderer. But there were also other times.

TABLE TEN

*Times of Murders*


---

Dawn to midday .. .. .	15
Midday to sunset .. .. .	33
Sunset to midnight .. .. .	15
Midnight to dawn .. .. .	12
Unknown .. .. .	3

---

Methods were equally various.

TABLE ELEVEN

*Means employed*


---

Beating with	Lathi .. .. .	40
	Bamboo flute .. .. .	1
	Paddy pestle .. .. .	1
	Other implements .. .. .	4
Striking with	Axe .. .. .	11
	Scythe .. .. .	2
	Spear .. .. .	3
	Mattock .. .. .	1
	Pick axe .. .. .	1
	Bill hook .. .. .	1
	Dao (a kind of chopper) .. .. .	2
	Adze .. .. .	4
Shooting with	Arrow .. .. .	1
	Drowning .. .. .	2
	Strangling .. .. .	1
	Unknown .. .. .	3

---

In most murders, a lathi or an axe was the means but the variety of other instruments suggests that the weapon must in many cases have been the first which came to hand. A curious



fact is that in only one case was there shooting with arrows. A bow and arrows is part of every Santal house but it is possibly not as handy as an axe or a stick and so for this reason it may have been avoided.

In the only case of drowning, the murderer Labha Hembrom pushed his little cousin off a river bank fifteen feet high into water which was four feet deep. The child was young and was drowned.

## VII

## SITES

In a tribal society, a site is usually not of much importance to a murderer but the extent to which Santal murderers made no attempt to secure privacy is noteworthy.

TABLE TWELVE

*Sites of Murders*


---

Inside the village .. .. .	17
Inside a house or a courtyard .. ..	32
In a cultivated field .. .. .	6
By a well .. .. .	2
By a tank .. .. .	3
By a river .. .. .	2
In a river bed .. .. .	3
On a hill .. .. .	2
In a jungle .. .. .	4
On a lonely road .. .. .	4
Unknown .. .. .	3

---

In one case, the site was peculiarly important. Cholera had broken out in village Birhankitta and the relations of a little girl, Pania Soren, were suspected. Pania's parents were out of the village and had left her in the care of her maternal uncle Kanhai Marandi. During the night, the villagers went to the house, dragged Pania and Kanhai's mother, Jeona Murmu from their beds, and took them to the manjhithan, or memorial shed to the first founder of the village. Here they attacked the woman and the girl and beat Pania to death. There is little doubt that in selecting the manjhithan as the site the villagers felt that they were enlisting the village founder's help in stopping the disease.

## VIII

## THE CAUSES OF MURDER

The causes of Santal murders are not easily classified since in most cases one cause is not entirely free from another. I have, therefore, selected what seemed to be the major cause and the following table analyses the results:—

TABLE THIRTEEN

*Causes of Murder*


---

Witchcraft .. .. .	16
Quarrels over property .. .. .	12
Defence of private property .. .. .	5
Insanity .. .. .	4
Revenge .. .. .	2
Family quarrels .. .. .	5
Sex motives .. .. .	10
Alcohol .. .. .	19
Exasperation .. .. .	2
Others .. .. .	3

---

## IX

## THE CAUSES OF CRIME: WITCHCRAFT

Of the causes of Santal murders, alcohol is numerically the greatest but the most important factor is witchcraft. When there is a run of illness or death in a family, Santals suspect that a witch is responsible and if the witch fails to remedy the situation, she is exposed to the gravest danger.

The connection between sickness and witchcraft is evident in the case in which Matla Hembrom killed his step-mother Fulo and her sister Chuni. A month before, Matla's daughter had died. Then his son Jetha fell ill. Chuni was the wife of Juna Kisku, the village Ojha and Jetha was taken to his house for treatment. Fulo lived with her husband, Mohon Hembrom in a separate house but on the night of the murder Fulo, Chuni, her daughter, Ramdhan Kisku and her son, Udai Kisku, Matla and Juna were all sleeping in the room in which Jetha was kept. Suddenly in the middle of the night Matla was heard shouting that he had killed the two witches and he had a pick-axe in his hand. He then picked up his sick son, Jetha, and took him home.

In this case, there were circumstances which suggested mental instability on Matla's part and it is obvious that the death of his daughter had driven him to despair. When his son failed to get well, he saw no alternative to murder and killed the witches whom he thought were to blame.

In another case, Achi Kisku was killed by her two brothers, Durga Kisku and Dhobo Kisku. Dhobo's daughter had died a month before. His son then got small-pox. A Jan Guru was consulted and all the women of the village were collected in Dhobo's house. Jan Gurus are men of sensitive temperament often possessed of hypnotic powers. They are believed to divine the influence of evil spirits and the medium of execution of their influence by placing oil on a leaf and staring through it. Ojhas practice native Santal medicines of drugs and herbs and also curative magic. When all the women were gathered together Dhobo placed a vessel full of water and a purse full of rupees in the courtyard and asked the women to touch the water and take a rupee each, evidently acting upon the advice of the Jan Guru. Dasmat Kisku, 65 years old Manjhi of the village was asked to see that the women did as they were told and did not run away. Achi left the meeting on the pretext of drinking water at the well but she did not do so, and was dragged back by her two brothers. She was kept in the house till late in the afternoon when she was taken to the Manjhi-*than* to pray for the child's recovery. She escaped again and took shelter in the house of a villager but was once more caught by her brothers and was then sent under guard to the *than* of Chandrai Baba in village Chihurbona to pray there for the child's recovery. Chandrai Marandi, popularly called Chandrai Baba, who had a shrine of his own was reputed to be a man with powers of securing divine intervention.

While returning from there she lagged behind on the excuse of easing herself but again was dragged to Dhobo's house. Late at night some people who were drinking at some distance from Dhobo's house heard cries coming from there but knowing the desperation of Dhobo and Durga they felt afraid of inquiring or intervening.

Next morning Biru Hembrom, Achi's son, complained to the Manjhi that his mother was missing. A meeting of the villagers was held and the two brothers were asked to produce the woman. They asked for one month's time to search for her. A few days later vultures were hovering over a hill close to the village. Durga and Dhobo, on being questioned, confessed they had killed Achi on the night her cries were heard in Dhobo's house and they produced the lathis with which they had assaulted her. Dhobo's son had died on the evening Achi was killed. The two accused were

sentenced to 7 years' rigorous imprisonment for voluntarily causing grievous hurt. In this case Achi's behaviour is interesting for it appears that she believed herself to be a witch or otherwise she would not have avoided touching the pot of water and taking a rupee.

In another case, Mangal Soren and Lodhia Kisku assaulted Gaura Murmu, wife of Mangat Kisku, accusing her of causing the death of Rajam Kisku, brother of Mangat and father of Lodhia. Mangal Soren was the brother of Rajam's second wife. When Rajam had fallen ill, Mangat, Lodhia and Mangal had gone and consulted the Jan Guru, Peru Tudu, who declared that Gaura and Rajami's daughter Maino, aged 11 years, were witches and responsible for his illness. He received Rs 3-4-0 from Lodhia and a pair of silver bangles from Mangat as his fee. Rajam died soon after and Mangat and Gaura went to attend the funeral. Mangal asked Gaura to bring Rajam back to life and when she failed to do this he struck her with a bamboo stick with a sharp pointed iron end and she fell down and died.

At the trial, Peru Tudu, the Jan Guru, denied that he had declared Gaura and Maino to be witches and responsible for Rajam's illness. He had merely said that Rajam was possessed by a bonga or spirit which should be propitiated by the sacrifice of a pig and the scattering of rice outside the village. Lodhia was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for voluntarily causing hurt and Mangal was given a life sentence.

In another case, a woman was believed to be a witch because she had pointed teeth and she was killed because of it.

## X

### THE CAUSES OF MURDER: SEX

In a total of 78, 10 murders for sex is not a small proportion, yet when the flexibility of the Santal marriage system is remembered, even ten is strangely excessive. Under Santal custom, sexual relations are very little hampered by marriage. Divorce is fairly easy, and adultery leads often to marriage with the adulterer. It is, therefore, all the more necessary to see in what circumstances sex led to murder.

In two cases, husbands caught their wives having intercourse with lovers.

Padam Tudu, an old man of 60 years, had gone to Chandna market with his wife, Luksi Marandi. Luksi left the market earlier and when Padam reached home he found her having inter-

course with a man in the darkness of the village lane. The man ran away and Luksi declined to say who he was. This enraged the old man and he killed her. He was given two years' rigorous imprisonment.

In the other case, Jitu Hansdah caught his wife Barki Soren in the act of intercourse with a man in his house. He could not see who the man was and Barki also did not give out his name. They had a quarrel but that night he did nothing. The next day he took her to her father's house but on the way they again quarrelled. Barki called Jitu a bastard and an idiot. Jitu then killed her with a *dao* which he had brought with him in his clothes.

In both the cases it was less the detection of the act than the refusal of the wife to disclose the lover's name that led to the murders. If the name had been disclosed the husband would have had his remedy in the village council. He could have demanded twice the marriage money (*pon*). But in the absence of the name, his remedy was gone. He was confronted with infidelity and could do nothing about it. It was the inability to adjust the matter in the tribal way that caused these murders.

A somewhat similar situation led to a murder in June 1934. Lachmi Murmu was married to Ganga Besra but had a love affair with Sarjug Besra. The matter went to the village council and Sarjug was asked to pay double the marriage money and keep Lachmi Murmu as his wife. He asked for fifteen days' time to pay the money. Meanwhile Ganga Besra thought the matter over and decided that he wanted his wife more than the compensation. He decided, therefore, to forego the money. On the day of the murder he and Lachmi left the village to attend a marriage in the house of a relative. On the way they began to quarrel about Sarjug. Some words of Lachmi stung Ganga to violence and he beat her with a lathi. The next day she died from the injuries. Ganga was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment for voluntarily causing grievous hurt. In this murder, it was almost certainly the tactless taunts of Lachmi that were the actual cause of the beating, for the village council had already adjusted the sexual situation.

Taunts played a similarly decisive part in another 'sexual' murder which occurred in January 1937. Dhuma Hansdak' forced Chito Tudu to have intercourse with him in a jungle. Chito informed her husband, Chunka Hansdak'. A village council met and Chunka demanded double the marriage money and his wedding expenses and offered to let Dhuma take Chito as his wife. Dhuma refused to pay the money and taunted Chunka. This stung Chunka to fury and he struck and killed Dhuma with a

lathi. Chunka was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. After the murder, Chito continued living with him as his wife without any stigma.

In the preceding cases jealousy played a minor part but there were two cases in which it was the chief cause. In one case, the husbands of two women, Gonglo and Duli had been neglecting their wives because of an affair with a widow named Malho. One day Gonglo and Duli joined forces with two other women, Somi and Pori. They overpowered Malho in a jungle and thrust a sal stick up her vagina causing her death. Somi and Pori were acquitted but Gonglo and Duli were sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment.

In the other case, Basu, alias Damu Kisku, was in love with Sumi Murmu a young girl of his village. Damu was about 20 years old. Sumi, however, loved Jugal Baski of the same village and married him. About a month after their marriage, Sumi and Jugal were returning from a fair when Damu caught hold of Sumi's hand. Jugal hit him on the head with a lathi and Damu fled. Some days later Sumi and Jugal went to their barley field, a mile away from the village, and were returning in the evening, Sumi walking in front of Jugal who was carrying a bundle of barley, when Damu suddenly came up from behind and killed Jugal with a lathi. He was given a life sentence for murder. The case took place in March 1932.

Of the ten murders, only one emerged out of a refusal of intercourse. In this case, Sugrai Tudu and his wife, Barki Marandi had been recently married and belonged to the same village. Barki had gone to her father's house for a short visit. She was grazing her father's cattle in the jungle when Sugrai happened to come along with his cattle. It was noon time, there was no one about and Sugrai proposed that they should have sexual intercourse with each other. Barki refused and persisted in her refusal. Her husband then caught hold of her and they struggled together. He threw her down on the ground and tried to have intercourse with her by force. She died of strangulation and some minor injuries were found on the labia majora also. Sugrai was sentenced to 5 years' rigorous imprisonment for homicide not amounting to murder. The case occurred in 1935. In this case, there were almost certainly some facts which did not reach the Court.

## XI

### THE CAUSES OF MURDER: FAMILY QUARRELS

Tension within the family arising from failure to respect customary etiquette or to concede customary dues accounted

for only five murders. This is a very small figure and its lowness is almost certainly due to the Santal system of adjusting differences through the village council and an ingrained respect for custom. The great majority of difficulties are never allowed to linger on and fester but are examined and settled in the village.

A case of 1931 arose from a failure of a Santal wife to show the customary respect to her husband's elder brother. In this case, Shyam Hembrom noticed that his sister-in-law, Murli, was having an affair with one of his cousins, Bikram Soren. He upbraided her and one evening he found Murli and Bikram chatting together alone and openly accused Murli of her loose behaviour. A quarrel began and Murli finally went to her room, with Bikram following her. She came out again still abusing Shyam who by this time had lost patience with her. She was about to go to the house of a neighbour when Shyam assaulted her and killed her. He confessed his guilt and was sentenced to 5 years' rigorous imprisonment for culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

In another case, Lathe Murmu killed his father, Bhado Murmu, because his younger brother had been married before him.

A case which hinged on customary dues occurred in 1940. In this case Baijnath Soren had divorced his wife for petty theft and had returned her dowry. A Santal wife is entitled to get back her dowry or the money she had earned herself up to the time of the divorce. After some time Baijnath's wife returned and alleged that her dowry had not been paid back. She announced that she would not leave his house unless she got it back at once. They quarrelled in a *rahar* field and Baijnath killed her during the quarrel. After a few days, the dead body was discovered in the field by some villagers. Baijnath confessed to having killed his wife unintentionally. A village meeting was held and Baijnath promised to pay Rs. 20 if the matter was hushed up. The dead body was buried in a stream passing through Baijnath's field. The facts later leaked out and on investigation the dead body was discovered. Baijnath, however, was acquitted for want of evidence.

## XII

### THE CAUSES OF MURDER: LUNACY

Of the 78 murders, only 4 were committed by criminal lunatics and only one of the cases had special interest.

In this case, Munshi Hembrom, aged 16, years killed his 3 year old nephew Matru Tudu of whom he was very fond. The child was playing in the courtyard with Munshi while the rest of the family was out. He suddenly picked up a *dao*, took the child

into a room, put him on a mat over which he had spread a clean sheet and killed him. When the family returned and discovered the murder, Munshi at once owned up and produced the *dao* from under a heap of Mahua flowers in one of the rooms. He said that the goddess Kali and the witches had ordered him to sacrifice the child.

In jail before the trial his behaviour was so normal that the Civil Surgeon was prepared to discharge him as sane if his relations would undertake to offer security to the satisfaction of Government that they would prevent him from doing injury to himself or others. Munshi had been in the habit of drinking heavily and it was considered possible that this case was an example of sudden mania following alcoholic derangement. He was sent to the Ranchi Mental hospital where he was found to behave normally. He was eventually discharged on execution of a bond in accordance with law.

It is significant that in this case also witchcraft, aided by alcohol, and working on an unbalanced mind led to murder.

### XIII

#### THE CAUSES OF MURDER : ALCOHOL

It is neither possible nor desirable to tear an aboriginal from his drink. Not only does drink play an important part in his socio-religious life, it affords him extra sources of nutrition and helps to sustain the gaiety of his tribal life. Although, therefore, the largest number of murders were associated with alcohol, their importance should not be exaggerated. Their proportion was high but their actual total was not large.

The irresponsibility of 'drinking' murders is shown in three cases. All of these occurred at festivals.

In village Barachaparia, the Sohraë festival was taking place and cattle-baiting was about to finish. For cattle-baiting a large sal stake is fixed in front of the house of anyone supplying an animal. The fixing and removal of the stakes is done by the communal functionaries, the Jog Manjhi and his assistant the Jog Paranik. Karan Hembrom was the Jog Manjhi and Dusum Hembrom was the Jog Paranik. Khepa Hembrom, the naeke, was one of those in front of whose house a stake had been fixed. The Jog Manjhi and the Jog Paranik went in the afternoon to remove the stake when the whole village was just recovering from its drunken stupor. The Jog Manjhi and his assistant arrived at the house of Khepa at about sunset. Khepa objected to the removal of the stake then and a quarrel followed in which the



Jog officials were worsted. Dugan Hembrom, a villager, came and interfered but was assaulted by Khepa. Dugan's father, Bisu Hembrom, turned up to intervene and received a fatal blow from a crow-bar, while his brother Gulia who came to help his father was also assaulted. Khepa had by that time lost all self-control and he kept on hitting the fallen man with a bahngi which he had seized after his women folk had wrested the crow-bar from him. At the trial, Khepa was acquitted for want of evidence. The case occurred in January 1934.

During another Sohræ festival in 1940 when nearly everyone was drunk, Debi Soren and his wife quarrelled. Debi pulled her hair, she shrieked and her brother Khodo Hembrom, who heard her cry while he was playing on a bamboo flute, came running up. He hit Debi on the head with the flute causing concussion of the brain. Debi died next day. Khodo received a sentence of two years' rigorous imprisonment for voluntarily causing grievous hurt.

Another 'drinking' murder which was associated with a festival occurred in 1936. On the day of the Sankrant festival, Kalu Tudu's household had drunk copiously. Kalu Tudu's sister Raimat Tudu was on a visit to the house and her husband Jetha Marandi had come in the evening to take her home. He was invited to stay for food and drink. He felt rather cold and asked his wife to get him a wrapper. She did not give him the wrapper but started grumbling saying that he did not care for her or sleep with her but was having an affair with some other woman. Jetha kicked her, she shouted for help and Kalu came out with a lathi and gave Jetha a blow on the head from which he died. Kalu received a sentence of 4 years' rigorous imprisonment for causing homicide not amounting to murder.

In another case, drinking was not the immediate cause of the murder but the behaviour which resulted from drinking so wounded the self-respect of a Santal that a murder resulted. In this case, Sonu Murmu of Chakaldanga had returned from Khagra after earning some money. He set out to purchase a bullock and stopped on the way in the liquor shop at Nabogram for a drink. There he met Rupi Murmu, a woman aged about 40 years. Sonu was about 30 years old. In their conversation they discovered that Rupi's daughter was married to a son of Kahra Soren, a cousin of Sonu. Rupi had two other women friends with her. The women, having had a drink, left and went and slept under a tree. After a time two of the women went away leaving Rupi still sleeping there. Sonu happened to pass that way and saw her. Both of them were drunk. Sonu woke Rupi

and took her off to a field behind the bank of a tank and started having sexual intercourse with her in full daylight. Many people passed by and saw them. Shome Hembrom, step-son of Rupī, who lived with his father-in-law in a village close by came to the liquor shop and learned what had happened. Khare Soren also arrived there and hearing of the affair refused to call Shome a relation after what his mother had done. Stung by the indignity of the affair Shome took a friend Gour Marandi and caught Sonu late in the evening as he was going home through the fields. They assaulted him mercilessly with lathis and he died. Both the accused were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for 18 months for voluntarily causing grievous hurt. The case occurred in May 1938.

## XIV

## THE CAUSES OF MURDER : EXASPERATION

The remaining causes of Santal murder do not call for special comment. Disputes over property were few but normal while long-standing enmity culminated in only two murders. There were, however, two cases which deserve analysis.

Khudu Hansdah had quarrelled with his wife, Arsu Kisku, accusing her of extravagance. Khudu was very poor; he had borrowed some paddy but his wife had used it more quickly than he had anticipated and had asked for more. Arsu had then borrowed some more paddy from a neighbour and while she was husking it, her 3 year old daughter Gichu, started crying. Khudu wanted her to pick up the child and pacify it but she refused. That night she would not cook any food and they all went to sleep without any. Next morning Khudu went out to work. The child was crying from hunger so Mehi Marandi, the wife of Khudu's younger brother, gave her some gruel and then went out to work. After a time she returned to borrow a rope from Arsu and found the child dead with her throat cut and Arsu in the loft with one end of a rope tied round her neck and the other end tied to a bamboo. Mehi called Khudu, her own husband and several others. Arsu was brought down and said that she was tired of life with Khudu and could not bear her daughter to remain behind him. At the trial she received a life sentence for murder.

In the other case, the husband of a Santal woman, Bodhi Murmu who lived separately from his brothers and mother had died three months previously. On his death Bodhi remained in possession of his properties on behalf of her children and in exercise of her own right of maintenance according to custom. In the event of her re-marriage she would not have been entitled to the possession of the properties or the custody of the children. On the day before the occurrence Bodhi's father's people had come and

were being entertained in her house. On the day of occurrence, Chot Kesrai Soren, her husband's brother, who was also the Manjhi of the village, called the people of the village to her house. In their presence, he and his mother asked Bodhi to re-marry, as she was yet young, and to vacate her husband's house and property, leaving the children to the care of Choto Kesrai. She declined saying that she had her children to care for and had no desire to re-marry. She was supported by a number of the villagers. Thereupon the mother-in-law called her a witch who had killed her husband and would kill them also. Her supporters cited another instance of a young widow in the village who was in a similar position and whom nobody was forcing to re-marry although her husband had also died a few months before. A quarrel started between her supporters and those of her relations. She, however, was so upset by the quarrel and the taunts that she slipped away from the assembly, dropped her two sons in a near-by well and herself jumped into it. The case occurred in September 1936. Bodhi was given a life sentence for murder.

In both these cases, the murderers were women and in both cases, the causes of the murder lay in a form of hopeless despair which made them feel that there was no longer any point in living.

#### CONCLUSION

That murder is not an important factor in Santal life will be evident from the figures. But it should not on this account be lightly dismissed. Each murder was a personal tragedy in which at least one village and at least one home were involved. In many cases, murders were sudden. In cases where they were intentional the circumstances were often such that no other alternatives seemed possible. In a few cases, action by the village community might have prevented them. But for the murderers as a whole punishment was no deterrent and there is no obvious way in which they could have been checked.

There are certain types of murder which were conspicuously absent. There was no murder by torture, and no murder by poisoning. There were no self-murders for revenge. Only in one case there was an element of religious sacrifice. Murders of husbands by wives were almost non-existent. Moreover, it is noteworthy that not a single mahajan was killed. When the traditional Santal hostility to mahajans is remembered, a hostility which goes back to long before the Santal rebellion, the essentially gentle and peace-loving nature of Santals will be evident.

The true nature of a Santal murder will not be obscured if in the last analysis we treat it as a tragic accident.

# SHORT NOTES OF SOME REMARKABLE CRIMES IN THE CENTRAL PROVINCES & BERAR

By C. R. HEMEON

The crimes of which I give abstracts cover a wild field. They concern among others persons from Poland or Russia and Britain, they show that non-Hindus have not been unaffected by their environment and they also demonstrate that superstition is not absent from the minds of some Hindus of the upper castes. It is a range of bizarrerie which includes examples of human sacrifice, ophiolatry, black magic, *sahamarana*, exorcism and invultuation.

## I

1923. In Nagpur a police constable of strong religious tendencies amounting to fanaticism and his Kahar friend entered into a pact to cut off their own heads and thereby secure immortality from the Goddess Kali. They mistook the statue of the Virgin Mary in the Grotto Chapel on Seminary Hill for the Goddess and the constable stabbed himself to death. His companion who lost his nerve after he had inflicted a few injuries on his neck was prosecuted for the murder of the constable but acquitted.

The constable who was a recluse was in the habit of declaring that Ala and Udal had by offering their heads to the Sharda Devi at Mahyer attained immortality and that there was no reason why others should not follow their example. He also used to advise his hearers to emulate Ravan who had achieved immortality by offering his ten heads to Shiva. Before he stabbed himself in the neck he had bathed in a well near the Chapel and left in it his dhoti and shirt.

## II

1924. In Mandla a 15 year old Rajput boy of distinct promise and great charm lost his reason after he had seen a gruesome dramatic performance and was considered by his broken hearted relatives to be possessed by spirits. They took him to the Assistant to the Civil Surgeon for treatment but others were also consulted, among them being a harmless lunatic who was regarded with reverence by many and supposed to be spiritually gifted. The nature of the advice given by him was not revealed but it is possible that the theory of possession of the devil emanated from him. This devil had to be exorcised and 11 days after the first appearance of the signs of insanity his hands were burnt. During the same day he was tied to a post in his father's courtyard and given no food. During the extremely cold December night he was taken bound hand and foot and naked and deposited near the place where the harmless lunatic used to sit. In the morning his dead body was found there and the medical opinion was that death was due to exposure and cold.

This was not the only grim drama of that night. The boy's 22 year old sister worked herself into a state of frenzy in which she imagined that she was possessed by Kali and that the sacrifice of her 9 year old daughter would propitiate that Goddess and restore her brother's sanity. She first amputated the girl's middle finger, sprinkled the blood from it on some bread and took it to the place where her brother was tied up. She then returned to her house and with a sword killed her daughter. For this she was sentenced to undergo transportation for life and her father received a similar sentence for the murder of the boy by exposure. They were, however, released a few years later.

### III

1929. (1) A Kunbin in the Bhandara district announced that after a snake had bitten her little finger she had been cured by the *mantras* of 2 exorcists and that the snake had told her that it would not molest her again. When she was bitten for a second time in the same place and the exorcists visited her, she stated in a paroxysm that she should have installed in her house for worship a golden image of the snake. This image was obtained for her by her husband and on *Nagpanchami* day she gave signs of the influence on her of the serpent deity *Nagoba*. She used to wash her hands and feet, stand in front of the image and move her head to and fro presumably in snake-like movements. In the course of 2 years she acquired a considerable reputation as a healer and exorcist, although there was nothing to indicate that any cures resulted from her treatment or advice and it is probable that her patients were greatly impressed by her frenzy, simulated or otherwise, when she was under the hallucination that she was possessed of the God *Nagoba*.

(2) A simple and pathetic married couple who lived in another village had lost all of their 7 children and it was thought that the wife was possessed of an evil spirit. The husband had, but without result, sought to cure her of this malady by taking her to exorcists and when the Kunbin's fame reached their ears they decided to consult her. She arranged for them to stay with her and on the first day the wife and she made the snake-like movements. The former under the influence of the evil spirit in her asked for 2 goats and 4 chickens and these were supplied by her husband. Next morning after another invocation of the deity the 2 women went to a river where they twisted the necks of the goats and chickens and threw them into the water. This had, however, no effect on the evil spirit nor had the Kunbin's subsequent invocations to her deity, and despondent perhaps of success she told the couple to return to the house of her brother-in-law where they had previously stayed in the village.

(3) On that night she had a meal, bathed and tuned in with her reptilian deity. She then lit a fire with 2 or 3 big logs of wood in the courtyard and directed her husband who was on his way to his field to send to her the couple staying with her brother-in-law. When they arrived they found her standing in front of a blazing fire and naked but for a cloth resembling a *kasota* around her waist. The *mise en scene* was impressive and the unsophisticated couple were only too ready to execute her commands. The husband was deputed to see that the earthen lamp which was burning in front of the image was not extinguished and the wife was directed to remove her clothes. When the *lugda* was taken off, the wife had a feeling of shame and called upon the deity not to disgrace her. Her appeal was heard by her husband who emerged and in a tremulous way demanded the reason for his wife's divestment. The Kunbin had her retort ready. She told him that he was not to argue, she made him sit on the ground, she kicked him and she threw his cap and *langoti* into the fire.

(4) This would have seemed to be the point at which she should have halted. She was, however, no laodicean ophiolater and her next act was to lift up the weak and emaciated wife and throw her into the fire. The husband with what must be regarded as amazing audacity again remonstrated but lost his nerve and took to flight when the Kunbin ran towards him. He had not the courage to return and spent a night of misery a long way from her house. During his absence she had plunged a burning log into his wife's abdomen and burned a hole of the size of a mango in it. More than that, she had manually removed the organs, vessels and nerves with their attachments from the thorax and abdomen; and as they were not found it was presumed that they had been thrown into the sacrificial fire as an oblation to the deity.

(5) When some of the villagers went to the house in the morning, they found that the Kunbin's *kasota*-like cloth was wet and folded around the wife's head and neck. They also found that there were burns on the Kunbin's person, that she had extinguished the fire and that she was walking around the corpse. When she was asked what she had done she declared that her deity had killed the wife and on the night of her arrest she moved her head to and fro and maintained hysterically that her puissant *Nagoba* had killed the wife's ghost. Next morning she continued to weep but was not so hysterical and she claimed that she did not know what had happened after she had tied the golden image of *Nagoba* to the wife's neck when that deceased person's ghost had clattered its teeth and asserted that it would eat her.

(6) She had not shown any signs of insanity before this and it would appear that her act was committed when she was in a state of emotional delirium produced and intensified by previous failures to exorcise the wife's evil spirit. She was not legally insane and was sentenced to transportation for life.

## IV

1931. A Gowara school teacher, 31 years of age, who attributed the illness of his children and the deaths of his cattle in the Bhandara district to the sorcery of a Powar, dressed himself up as a Goddess and patrolled the village one night in order to protect its inhabitants and their property from his evil influence. 5 or 6 days later, he put on a green *lahenga*, a green shirt and a green cap around which he wrapped a yellow *pheta*. He had *ghungrus* on his feet and carried a *trishul* (trident) in each hand. He then went to the Powar's house and said to him: "Take care of your sorcery, you sorcerer. Come out. Have faith in my *debi*. You have killed or attempted to kill my cows and buffaloes, made me ill and caused my children to suffer." The Powar's son intervened and received a slight injury from one of the tridents. When the Powar ran to his rescue, the school teacher stabbed him in the neck with the same weapon and he died half an hour later. His assailant who was sentenced to transportation for life had previously shown a tendency to violence but his plea of insanity was rejected. He had acted under the hallucinative impression that he was the Goddess Kali.

## V

1932. A Kohli who wished to learn *mohini mantra* in order to attract women and two Dhimars who wished to be taught black magic by means of which they could destroy a malguzar inimical to them were introduced to two Mahars supposed to be experts in these arts. These Mahars arranged for the holding of a *puja* by night in the jungle after they had seen that the articles required for the ceremony had been purchased and that their fee of Rs 40 was with their victims. On the selected site they stretched out umbrellas and a *dhoti*, outlined some figures and pretended to worship. One of the Mahars then produced a powder and had it divided by one of the Dhimars into five portions on the representation that each of them had to take a portion to protect their bodies from the evil spirits to be invoked for the elimination of the malguzar. The Kohli and Dhimars were asked to drink the powders after they had been mixed in water and when they had done so they became unconscious. The Mahars then robbed them of the Rs 40 and removed the gold *malkadis* worn in his

ears by the Kohli. The latter escaped death by a narrow margin but the Dhimars died. It was extremely probable that the powder used was *dhatura* powder. One of the Mahars had some of it as well as *dhatura* seed in his house when it was searched by the police.

## VI

1932. In Jubbulpore a Goanese was brutally murdered by night and his wife who was either of Polish or Russian extraction and her paramour were charged with his murder. They were convicted by the Court of Session but acquitted on appeal. The wedding group photograph had been trampled on and placed under the husband's corpse.

## VII

1934. Orders prohibiting *Sahamarana* were passed by Lord Bentinck in 1829 but Damoh district provided an example of it over a century later. A Chadar died and his 25 year old widow proclaimed her resolve to become *Sati*. News of this spread to surrounding villages and many people came to witness her immolation on her husband's pyre. Before cremation began she was induced to abandon her intention and after she had returned to her house, about 300 yards from the pyre, and lay down the pyre was ignited and the mourners had a purification bath in the river near by. Shortly afterwards she dashed from her house and threw herself on the corpse. After a short interval during which she sustained very severe burns, she fell from the pyre but was subsequently thrown back by her deceased husband's brother and his cousin. Although it was certain that she was alive when she fell from the pyre, it was far from certain that she was alive when she was cast on it.

## VIII

1934. The family of a Muslim Sub-Inspector of Police in Mandla district suffered from illnesses and when his 2 months old son was dying, he was advised by the local agent, a Brahmin, of the owner of 34 villages to summon a Pankin, who was reputed to be a witch and responsible for most of the ailments in the village, and to ask her to remove her spell from his infant son. Several constables attempted but without success to induce her to go to the station house and her daughter and she were ultimately brought there by force. At the agent's suggestion she was compelled to draw water from a well, to hold a jug full of it in her hands and to wave it uttering a prayer for the cure of ailing persons before she drank it. This was ineffective and so also was the



village sorcerer's attempt to defeat her spells. The allegation that she was then made to drink water from a Chamar's hand was not held to be established but it was found that she and her daughter had been beaten with castor oil branches, which are considered to be efficacious in driving away evil, before they were permitted to go away. The child had died just before or just after the two women had been forcibly taken to the station house. Next morning they were expelled from the village by the agent's son.

## IX

1934. In a Basim (Akola District) case, the 32 year old wife of the Veterinary Assistant Surgeon, a Punjabi Mussalman, and her suspected paramour, a Rajput youth, were acquitted of the charge of having murdered her husband with a knife. The prosecution had also alleged that some time prior to the alleged murder the paramour had gone to a village, 4 miles from Basim, to enlist the services of an expert in *Karni* (black magic) in order to bring about the husband's death. In this he did not succeed but learned that a Mang in Basim was a man with the required qualifications. The Mang who was then approached was paid Re 1-8-0 to make a *putla* and promised Rs 50 if the husband died. The *putla*, which was not made by the Mang but by a friend to whom he gave wax and powdered red lead for the purpose, was about 5 inches long; needles were inserted in it and it was buried in a pit near the doorway of the deceased's house. The evidence on this point was so divergent and fantastic that it had to be rejected, but invultuation is one of the commonest methods of witchcraft and the witnesses regarding its use were not disbelieved on the ground that resort to it was either out of the question or abnormal.

## X

1935. (1) A Mahar in Chanda District who was a leading man in his village and reported to have a knowledge of witchcraft, had been outcasted because he ate fowls and drank liquor. When his son on the morning of the *Holi* day tried to purchase meat, B an old Mahar of good character stopped the transaction. Later in the day there was a conference under a tamarind tree between the Mahar A, a Mavia C also an influential man with a knowledge of witchcraft, another Mavia D, 2 Naiks and 2 others, and the Mahar A and Mavia C proposed that they should because of successive crop failures propitiate God. They also proposed the sacrifice of a boy or girl in the *Holi* that evening in the village. This proposal was not acceptable to their companions and the meeting dispersed after the proposers had accused them of chicken-heartedness and boasted that they (A and C) had performed many human sacrifices in the past.

(2) That evening the same group made a house to house collection of unhusked rice, fuel and grass and secured some fencing posts. One of them had a drum and the Marar A carried *ghungrus*. They then went to the *Holi* a furlong from the tamarind tree and it was ignited by the Marar A because he was an expert in sorcery. The oldest woman in the village worshipped it and placed near it 2 earthen dolls, a hen's egg, wet pulse and yellow rice. The Marar A who had put on the *ghungrus* gyrated around it, his companion played on the drum and the women sang until the faggots fell half burned. The gathering then broke up.

(3) After supper the Marar A, his son, the Mavia C and a companion went to a neighbouring village where they joined in merrymaking near the *Holi*. The companion had a drum and A his *ghungrus*. The Mavia C lit a *bidi* with the help of an ember but as they were going away A ordered him to throw it away for the reason that the village would lose its prosperity if a *bidi* lit from the *Holi* were taken from it. This order was instantly obeyed.

(4) On return to their village, the suggestion of A and C to return to the *Holi* was not approved at first by the 2 Naiks, the Mavia D and their 2 companions but when A and C abused them and threatened to destroy their children by sorcery they went with them. On arrival at the *Holi* A and C asked the 5 others to accompany them somewhere else but they refused to do so and they were adjured to await their return or in default be beaten or killed by sorcery. A and C returned an hour later bringing with them the old Marar B who had been keeping watch on his field. Shortly afterwards, A and C each caught one of his hands, forced him to stand in front of the *Holi* and called out "*Swami Swami.*" An invitation to the 5 others to assist was declined but when A snatched a burning log from the fire and threatened to brand them with it the Mavia D and the 2 Naiks yielded to the threat. The old Marar's stick was snatched from him by C who gave it to D; and C and one of the Naiks held his hands. The other Naik gagged him and D held him by the waist. A then removed his (B's) clothes and with his 4 companions threw him into the fire. In spite of severe burns he managed to escape but was overtaken a furlong away on some fallow land. A and C threw him down, A sat on him, C and D held his legs and the 2 Naiks his hands. A then placed his knee on his neck and with both hands twisted his neck. He died almost immediately.

## XI

1935. (1) A Dhangar in Amraoti District had for 18 months suffered from a severe illness which did not respond to ordinary

treatment and his relatives who were of the opinion that the only way in which his life could be saved was by resort to a witch doctor secured the services of a Gond who "used to practice wizardry in a small way." The Gond and his uncle spent the night in the vicinity of the Dhangar's house and next morning he went to his patient, placed an idol near him and waved over him a charmed lemon on which some red powder had been sprinkled. This was supposed to transfer the illness from the ailing man into the lemon, but the identity of the powder was not disclosed and the reason for the Gond's failure to visit his patient on the evening of his arrival was not revealed.

(2) After he had performed the rites, he threw the lemon into the compound of the Dhangar's neighbour and castefellow, but it was not suggested that he did so to injure him in any way. The neighbour's wife informed her husband of this on his return from collecting firewood and it was clear that both of them believed that it would bring them misfortune. He accordingly went to the other house and learning that the Gond had thrown it into his compound ordered him to go and remove it forthwith. The Gond proceeded to do so without demur and when he was picking it up, the aggrieved Dhimar seized a weaver's stick and inflicted 2 heavy blows on his skull and after his collapse on other parts of his body. The Gond died almost immediately. His assailant's plea of grave and sudden provocation on the ground that the presence of the lemon constituted danger to his life was rejected.

## XII

1936. The corpse of a 2½ year old girl of the Kurmi caste was found in a pool among rocks near a village on one of the banks of the Nerbudda river in Hoshangabad district. The body was wrapped in a *lugda* and the post-mortem examination showed that a portion of the left lobe of the liver had been skilfully cut out with a sharp instrument.

She had disappeared on the previous afternoon and it was suspected that she had been kidnapped by a woman who was the mistress of the priest of a temple in the village. An old and infirm woman with a reputation for incantatory healing was also suspected and it was suggested but not established that these 2 women had at the priest's instigation brought the child to him as her liver was required for the treatment of some person. The identity of that person or his ailment was not divulged, but the priest disappeared on the morning when the corpse was found and widespread searches were unsuccessful.

## REVIEWS

C. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF, *The Chenchus* (Macmillan, 1943), Rs 20.

'At a time, writes Dr von Fürer-Haimendorf,' when the shadow of war darkens the larger part of the civilized world and many illustrious seats of learning are so close to the sound of battle that research must have been brought almost to a standstill, great responsibility rests with those countries where the work of scholars can continue undisturbed and printing presses still fulfil the function of promulgating their discoveries. To them has fallen the task of tiding science . . . over the crisis and of promoting such research as cannot be postponed to later years.

Among the branches of science in which any delay in the gathering of material must result in a permanent loss to the world's stock of knowledge is anthropology. Its subject is the rapidly changing cultures of primitive races, and since no exertions of future generations can retrieve what we fail to record in our time, the gratitude of the scientific world is due to those governments and institutions that sponsor the study of primitive peoples and enable anthropologists to publish the result of their investigations.'

Unhappily, few of the administrations either of the Provinces or of the States in India have much claim to our gratitude in this respect. There seems to be a general idea that an anthropologist must cover the endless expenses of touring, the costly business of collecting, the collection of specimens, the employment of assistants and interpreters, to say nothing of the even more important duty of keeping himself more or less alive, on an income that would be regarded as inadequate for a head clerk in a government office or, say, a Circle Inspector of Police. The most meagre grants and subsidies are made and I sometimes wonder what future generations, faced with the now inevitable gap in our knowledge of the peoples of India, will think of the rulers of today who have proved so indifferent to closing that gap.

The sympathy of H.E.H. the Nizam's Government and the chance of war that stranded the Haimendorfs in Hyderabad has, however, made a pleasant exception to this gloomy picture, and the magnificently printed and produced volume before us suggests that unborn Hyderabadis will be better informed about the history of their State (and after all the real history of a State is the history of its people, not—as we have so long vainly thought—of its rulers) than the citizens of other parts of India. Dr von Fürer-Haimendorf's book has been written, printed and produced in Hyderabad, and our warmest congratulations must go to the Government Central Press for accomplishing a most professional job. If I have a word of criticism to offer, it is that on the title page of the book the imprint is given as 'Macmillan and Co., Ltd. London 1943.' This means that scholars referring to this book in future will put (London, 1943) after its title, and this will be misleading. There is no conceivable way in which the London office of Macmillan could have published this book—I wonder if they have even seen a copy of it; review copies have been sent out from their Bombay office; and I feel emphatically that if English firms are to give their imprint to works printed and produced in India they should give the credit to India.

Fürer-Haimendorf is one of the sadhus of science. For the past four years he and his most courageous wife (as brilliant, if not so learned, as himself) have lived in the malaria-stricken forests of Orissa and Hyderabad. They have had no car; they have often had very little food and the most wretched lodging. Haimendorf, *one of the leading ethnographic photographers in the world*, has had to abandon his project of making a cine-record of India's aboriginals because he cannot afford the films. Not—he cannot

obtain, he cannot *afford* them. This man, of a reputation unsurpassed by any scholar in the Eastern world, whom a kindly fate has sent to live among us, is today emaciated, wracked with continual fevers, fevers that are in no way necessary, because the people of India have not looked after him properly, have not seen to it that he is properly equipped. I will probably get into very hot water with my friends the Haimendorfs for writing this; they would certainly never pass it for the press if they could see it. But I feel strongly on the matter. I believe it important, not only for the Haimendorfs but all scholars in this field.

The Schulz-Kampffhenkel expedition up the Amazon in 1935-37, under the patronage of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Biology and of the Museu Nacional do Rio de Janeiro was provided with an aeroplane, motor-boats, every sort of photographic apparatus and recording instruments, food, clothes and equipment. A brilliant Indian scholar was recently approached by a learned society associated with one of the wealthiest cities in India and was asked to do research for them on Rs. 40 a month to cover salary and expenses.

But to return to the Chenchus! Fürer-Haimendorf is indomitable; nothing will stop him. He has the most commanding mind of any man I know; he is also one of the bravest. In spite of the difficulties I have mentioned, he and his wife lived among the Chenchus for six months and this book is the result. They went on to the far from attractive Reddis, and they have a book on them in the press. They have now settled down in Adilabad among the Gonds, and there are two massive volumes, packed with new and exciting matter, almost ready about them. They are now supervising schools for these Gonds and have done a great deal of medical relief. Every one of their books is full of pictures that make me faint with envy.

The Chenchus of Hyderabad live in the hill country north of the Kistna River, and there are only 426 of them left. There are more of them in the plains and in Madras, but the Hill Chenchus are very few, and I believe that Fürer-Haimendorf was able to do what few anthropologists in India have done, to become acquainted with every member of the community he was studying. Generations of casual contact with outsiders have done little to alter the fundamental structure of Chenchu culture and their mode of life is now, as it has been from times immemorial, essentially that of a primitive and semi-nomadic tribe of food-collectors.

Fürer-Haimendorf studies this culture in great detail, paying special attention to the economic life of the tribe. He has an important chapter on tribal law and the Chenchu attitude to crime. His account of marriage and funerary ceremonies is less detailed, and he was unable to get much information about the Chenchus' attitude to sex; indeed he comes to the conclusion that sex ranks in interest very far below food; 'it would appear that the Chenchus gave infinitely less thought to sex than such agricultural races as the Gonds, Baigas, Nagas and Lepchas'. I had the same feeling about the Hill Marias of the Abujmar.

Chenchu dances and games are not perhaps very interesting and they seem to have no songs of their own. 'Curiously enough they never sing.' Fürer-Haimendorf, however, recorded a number of very interesting folk-tales and legends, though not all of these are typically Chenchu. For example, the motif of 'The Man who went out to find Bhagavantaru' is common throughout Middle India; I myself have recorded it among the Baigas, the Murias and Marias, and the Bhuiyas of Bonai, and it occurs in several of the Indian collections of folk-tales; I have a whole Chapter on this story in my forthcoming *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal*. Similarly the theme of 'The Man who Married the Spirit Woman' is distributed widely over the same area and in Chota Nagpur. Usually, however, the hero who performs the

marriage is not an aboriginal but one of the minor Hindu castes living in primitive society. Here the hero is called a 'hunter' and it is implied at least that he is a Chenchu. The theme of the washerman who steals the ears and claws and tail of the tiger killed by the hero, but fails to notice that the tips are missing, is one of those clichés of the folk-tale (as Bloomfield called them) that recur again and again in Indian oral literature. But all the Chenchu stories are interesting and well-told; I was specially intrigued by the tale of the invention of drums by monkeys (which is paralleled by a Muria story of how monkeys introduced divination and honey-eating to the world) and the ingenious story of the Sadhu and the first Chenchu.

The Chenchus have no village dormitory and not even a tradition of one. They remember how they used once to wear leaves and even now they put these on (as the reformed Juangs do) for certain ceremonial occasions. Although they are good at wickerwork baskets, they cannot make articles of plaited basket work. They have little artistic sense, but are apparently not entirely insensitive to the pleasing effect of regular pattern; combs seem to be the only articles they regularly decorate.

The Seligmans found that the untouched Veddas knew little about magic and were not much concerned over witchcraft; it was only after they had come into touch with Hinduism that they grew interested in these things. The primitive nature of Chenchu culture is indicated by the fact that magic plays no prominent role in it. 'There can be little doubt that the source of the black magic now occasionally perpetrated is to be sought in the contact with the neighbouring Hindus and Mohammedans, among whom black magic is a wide-spread practice.'

One of the most important sections of the book is that dealing with administrative matters, and there is a note by Mr Crofton describing the measures taken by H.E.H. the Nizam's Government to protect the Chenchus in a Chenchu Reserve, measures that were largely adopted as a result of Fürer-Haimendorf's researches. 'There are three factors', says Fürer-Haimendorf, 'which seem mainly responsible for the impending doom of the tribal cultures of India; the restrictions imposed by Government on the traditional occupations of the aboriginals, such as hunting, the use of forest-products, and shifting cultivation; the invasion of their habitat and subsequent alienation of their land by progressive agricultural population; the more or less voluntary renunciation of the old customs, ceremonies and recreations by the tribesmen themselves under the pressure of Hindu or Mission propaganda.' The result is a general loss of *joie de vivre* and communal energy. The following words should be underlined and remembered by everyone who has to do with primitive people—

The cultural decay of a people, eating away its vitality from within, is even more dangerous than temporary economic difficulties, which can in certain cases be remedied. No economic assistance can compensate for the collapse of a social order or revive abandoned ritual.

I could write page upon page about this profound, brilliant and absorbing treatise. I am afraid that this review is very discursive, in no way worthy of its subject. I doubt if any review could be. *The Chenchus* is a book which must be purchased and possessed. It must be read, and its lovely pictures enjoyed, in the leisure of one's own study. May the Haimendorfs go on from strength to strength in their labour of love for the people they admire and whose manners and life they have recorded with such fidelity and charm.

V. E.

SUNITY KUMAR CHATTERJI, *Languages and the Linguistic problem, Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs. No. II, 1943.*

IN this stimulating pamphlet, Dr. Chatterji gives a brief summary of the linguistic history of India and of the present position. He enumerates the chief linguistic problems of to-day and suggests a possible solution. He views the problem from a scholarly point of view, free from religious or political bias. He approaches it from a purely linguistic point of view estimating its efficiency as a means of everyday communication for a nation and as a vehicle for culture.

India presents perhaps the most complicated linguistic problem of any country. The Irish, Welsh and Balkan problems wither into insignificance beside the complex problem of India with its wave upon wave of immigrants and conquerors and its political subservience. Dr. Chatterji proposes that a simplified Bazar Hindustani in modified Roman script should become the lingua franca of India for the purpose of communication and for the unification of the country. At the same time, High-Hindi and Urdu should develop along their own lines as the chief cultural languages. In addition, English should remain the most important language after the mother tongue (or the literary language adopted in its place) for higher studies. This seems as a same suggestion as is at present possible. Once India has achieved independence, many of the prejudices against the Roman script and English language will be removed.

It is doubtful whether Dr. Chatterji fully appreciates the vigour of many of the tribal languages. He says 'the ultimate disintegration of Austric and Aryanization of the Austric speakers are inevitable.' It is true that in Chota Nagpur, for example, Oraon and Kharia seem to be giving place to ganwari, the village Hindi of the area. On the other hand, Santali, Mundari, and Ho are showing an obstinate vitality and even when their speakers are bilingual, the tribal language is in no way superseded. We may yet see a situation as in Wales and Ireland where the two languages exist side by side.

This is a terse and concise pamphlet and an able addition to an admirable series.

MILDRED ARCHER

#### NOTE

The article on 'Santal Murders' by S. M. Naqavi is modelled on Verrier Elwin's 'One Hundred Maria Murders' and constitutes a supplement to that article.







TINY FISHES GATHER WHEN THE DRY TREE IS BEATEN

# MAN IN INDIA

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## COMMENT

ALTHOUGH riddles in India are as numerous as children there has so far been little collection of them. Sarat Chandra Roy included some in each of his monographs and considerably more have appeared in recent years. But there are still whole areas of India where riddles are only oral and no attempt has been made to collect, print or analyse them. For this reason, 'the Indian riddle book' which comprises this number is less a survey of the Indian riddle as a whole than a selection of riddles from certain major tribes. To this selection certain additional material has been added but only when the work of collection has gone much further will a riddle book comprising all castes and embracing all areas be possible.

The importance of the riddle to anthropology will be obvious. A riddle is at once an expression of sensibility and a clue to interests. The riddles of a tribe are not merely children's toys. They are ways in which tribal differences are expressed. If we regard each tribe as having in some degree its own pattern of culture, riddles are one of the ways in which that pattern is most clearly seen. The absorption of Baiga culture in sex, for example, is paralleled in its riddles. Among Mundas a riddle for a needle is a fish that raises a ridge. Among the Baigas: 'Rub against a thigh. See a hole and go inside.' Or consider the Uraons. Compared with Santals, the Uraons have a much stronger bias to the dance. Santals dance only at festivals, weddings and certain restricted periods of the year. Uraons, on the other hand, dance all the year round with almost nightly passion while their songs again and again refer to dancing. Among the Uraons there are not less than ten riddles for a drum; among the Santals, four.

But the value of the riddle is not simply as an index to interests. In an essay on surrealism, M. Georges Hugnet said, 'images either by their truth or their strangeness are employed to explore the world', and Herbert Read has described the riddle as 'a sudden and vivid revelation of an object.' The value of a riddle is in the last analysis the value of a poem. To make a riddle is to delight in the world. To enjoy riddles is to have access to new forms of vitality.

W. G. A.

#### NOTE

In addition to the riddles and literature mentioned in the text, reference may be made to the following :—

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- S. C. MITRA, 'Riddles current in the District of Sylhet', *J. A. S. B.*, Vol. XIII (N.S.), pp. 105-25.
- M. LONGWORTH DAMES, *Popular Poetry of the Baloches* (London, 1907). Gives a number of interesting riddles.
- S. S. MEHTA, 'Some Riddles prevalent among the Women of Gujerat', *J. Auth. S. Bom.*, Vol. XV, pp. 111-23 and 129-38.
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- S. C. MITRA, 'A Few Riddles current in the District of Pabna', *J. Auth. S. Bom.*, Vol. XI, pp. 327-36.
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- R. N. MUNSHI, 'A Few Parsee Riddles', *J. Auth. S. Bom.*, Vol. X, pp. 409-25.
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V. E.

# AN INDIAN RIDDLE-BOOK

## BASTAR STATE

### *Muria*

#### I

The dock-tailed one has twenty-two cubs.

Spider.

#### II

The white cock's organ is bent.

*Gongi* shell.

#### III

It drinks water on the rock and jumps over the tree.

Axe.

#### IV

The piebald horse has a thousand leaves.

A bamboo umbrella.

#### V

✓ There is a black man in your house.

Ant.

#### VI

✓ On the bush are many yellow birds.

Chili.

#### VII

✓ The smell of the marriage feast is hot.

Chili.

#### VIII

✓ On the green tree is a dry piece of wood.

Finger-nail.

#### IX

The basket broke and out came the tiger.

A pig excretes.

#### X

✓ On the dry tree blossoms a flower.

Fire.

#### XI

✓ The hornless bullock grows a horn.

Moon.

#### XII

✓ The black cock gathers it ; the white cock spreads it out to dry.

Night and day.

## XIII

It is raining *dum-dum* ; the tortoise goes to the  
bank. Rain-hat.

## XIV

✓ This peacock has only one leg. An umbrella.

## XV

The orange has new flowers. An egg.

## XVI

; The tree has only two leaves. Man and his ears.

## XVII

A plough-share falls from the hillside. A lizard.

## XVIII

The white bullock has a black halter. *Kosa* cocoon.

## XIX

The white cock goes from house to house. Curds being hawked  
from door to door.

## XX

✓ You fire the arrow with all your might, but it  
falls below your feet. Urine.

## XXI

Two are dry and four are slimy. The horns and udders  
of a cow.

## XXII

A hundred dogs bite one lizard. Rafter of a house.

## XXIII

✓ A little sparrow scattered its feathers about  
the whole house. Lamp.

## XXIV

✓ It has a head but no heart. It walks but  
cannot speak. A copper coin.

## XXV

The flower is in the water but the fruit is in  
the tree. Wild fig.

## XXVI

The ram cries when you touch its horn. Grindstone.

## XXVII

The small drum has holes at either end. Mahua flower.

## XXVIII

✓It grows in the sun and dies in the shade. Sweat.

## XXIX

It shoots its arrow, but it has neither bow  
nor hands. A porcupine.

## XXX

✓A little pig has a cord in its bottom. Needle and thread.

## XXXI

Whistle and the pole waves to and fro. Tail of a dog.

## XXXII

The vagina is underneath, the penis is above. Tail of a cow.

## XXXIII

✓A little girl ties a lot of cloth round her waist. Spinner's bobbin.

## XXXIV

Two sisters live together with one husband. Tongs.

## XXXV

✓From the tree-top falls a green leaf. A parrot comes down  
to feed.

## XXXVI

✓The fruit of the jungle climbs to the sky. Whirlwind.

## XXXVII

A crooked footprint on a broad leaf. The navel.

## XXXVIII

✓On a burnt tree the vultures sit. People round liquor.

## XXXIX

The roasted hen jumps out of your bottom. Burnt grass spring-  
ing up again.

## XL

The earth is sticky : the lid is the broken half  
of a pot. Tortoise.

## THE CENTRAL PROVINCES

*Agaria*

I

Two black sisters that fart turn by turn.      Bellows.

II

✓ Two co-wives with but one throat between them.      Bellows.

III

Two snakes that whisper in a single hole.      Bellows.

IV

Two heads that speak with one voice saying  
*phusur phusur.*      Bellows.

V

The mother and sister who have one waistband  
 between them.      Tongs.

VI

The bride and bridegroom with a single navel. Tongs.

VII

✓ Once only she is virgin ; next time  
 She is an old woman  
 She is neither human nor animal.      What is she ?      Iron.

VIII

Father beats mother and the child springs out.      Fire by flint and  
 steel.

IX

The cripple with ten feet and three navels.      A plough.

X

The roasted *bami* fish that goes into the depths.      A coulter.*Baiga*

I

No one can touch the stars in the sky ;  
 And no one can touch this golden pendant.      A hanging wasps'  
 nest.

## II

A beautiful girl with a black spot on her face.    The flower of the  
    *parsa* tree (*butea*  
    *frondosa*.)

## III

✓They go and come as often as you wish ; but    A pair of shoes.  
     when they see water, they shiver.

## IV

Its mouth dances along from one place to    A cow grazing.  
     another.

## V

The ox is tied in its stall, but the yoke walks    A creeper.  
     away.

## VI

A little plough wanders fearlessly through the    A razor.  
     jungle.

## VII

One dung-hill for a hundred cows.    A honey-comb.

## VIII

In front, how beautiful ! But when you look    A girl's shadow.  
     behind it's ugly.

## IX

You can't lift up this royal necklace and put    A procession of ants.  
     it in your hair.

## X

A tree springs up when it hears the music of the    A toadstool growing  
     sky, but it has no branch or leaves.    after a thunderstorm.

## XI

It curls round like a snake. It is white as milk.  
     Solve my riddle and I'll carry you off with  
     me.    *Sutia*. A circular  
    silver ornament for  
    the neck.

## XII

✓A little girl makes the king weep.    Chili.



## XIII

White water in a black tank. In it dances  
a queen.

A churn in a pot of  
curds.

## XIV

A threshing-floor upside down.

A toadstool.

## XV

All day it was swollen; in the evening the  
swelling went down.

A bazaar.

## XVI

Mother lies still: father moves about on top  
of her.

A grindstone.

## XVII

No leaves, no branches, this tree stands  
solitary.

A column of smoke.

## XVIII

The walls of the well are made of wood. In  
the water swims a crocodile.

The mouth.

## XIX

A boy dances and as he dances ties a turban on  
his head.

Parched gram.

## XX

A dried-up frog carries a load on its back.

The cross-beam of a  
house.

## XXI

The python wriggles through the water.

A boat.

## XXII

On the fence a drum is hanging.

An ornament in the  
ear.

## XXIII

He makes it straight with his spittle. He  
finds the hole and pushes it in.

Threading a string of  
beads.

## XXIV

A little old woman with a load of rags on her  
back.

A hen.

## XXV

A cow with a crumpled horn goes into the  
deepest jungle. A scythe.

## XXVI

The palace has many tiles on the roof, many  
windows on its walls. But there is only one  
big door. When the king enters he cannot  
get out again. A fish trap.

## XXVII

✓ He climbs and he burns ; he looks like a girl  
carrying water. The sun.

## XXVIII

✓ The music drops from heaven, but who is the  
player ? Lightning.

## XXIX

From the wet tree, dry chips of wood. A man cutting his  
nails.

## XXX

✓ One sword, two sheaths. A man with two  
wives.

## XXXI

Touch the plate and a spring gushes put. The eye.

## XXXII

He weeps sitting in the river. A frog.

## XXXIII

The creeper is in the cave underneath the hill.  
But the flower is on the summit. The wick of a lamp.

## XXXIV

Yellow rice in a black earthen pot. Honey in the hive.

## XXXV

✓ A boy with a big stomach cries all night.  
He has no mother or father. The *mandar* (drum).

## XXXVI

A frog drinks the water of two tanks. A child at the breasts.

## XXXVII

Black when it goes in, red when it comes out. Iron in the forge.

## XXXVIII

A red crane stands in the valley, Suddenly  
it climbs the hill with a great crackling  
noise.

Fire.

## XXXIX

One pillar and two doors.

The nose.

## XL

✓The tiger roars in the ant's hole.

A gun.

## XLI

✓Where it tickles, there you press it.

A bug.

## XLII

✓The poor man throws it away ; the rich man  
puts it in his pocket.

Blowing the nose.

## XLIII

It has a neck but no head. It has an arm but  
no hands.

A shirt.

## XLIV

A beautiful palace without a door.

An egg.

## XLV

A thorn-covered bull with a single horn.

Brinjal.

## XLVI

✓Outside it is beautiful. It goes to and fro.  
But open it, and there's nothing but the  
mouth of a well.

Woman.

## XLVII

✓Without feet it climbs : without a tongue,  
it eats : if it drinks water, it dies.

Fire.

## XLVIII

✓The whole jungle is ablaze, but the sadhu's  
loin-cloth is untouched.

A path through the  
forest.

## XLIX

✓In four it boils, in four it cools, in four it sinks  
into the water.

The year and its  
seasons.

## L

Who would sleep on a moving bed? Who  
would weep for a dead king?

A flooded river and  
the death of a tiger.

VERRIER ELWIN

*Gond*

## I

✓ A black cow has a calf. The calf runs away  
and the mother stays behind.

The bullet from a  
gun.

## II

In a round house, the beams are tied together  
at one point.

The hornet's nest.

## III

It licks and licks with a long tongue; then  
suddenly it lies flat on the ground.

A grass broom.

## IV

From an old woman, when she washes in the  
morning, there comes a lot of dirt.

A fireplace.

## V

A knife dances on stumps.

A razor.

## VI

A tall thin brother stands upright, holding  
a sacred book.

A stalk of maize.

## VII

It eats, it runs, it vomits all at once.

A grindstone.

## VIII

All day it walks to and fro: at night it stands  
still.

A door.

## IX

A maina bird hops and hops and hops: she  
lays a hundred eggs by the way.

A needle.

## X

✓ An old woman keeps opening and shutting  
the doors.

An eye.

## XI

A fish swims between two shells, one above  
and one below.

The tongue.

## XII

It is here now, in a moment it is miles away ;  
as suddenly it returns.

The sight of a man.

## XIII

On the side of a hill is a hen which goes round  
and round. She has one leg and two wings. A creeper climbing  
up a tree.

## XIV

Between two shells sits a girl with a red  
face.

A lentil.

## XV

√ A half-eaten chappati.

The new moon.

## XVI

√ A well-cleaned and polished house, the home  
of a frog.

The tongue.

## XVII

In her pocket are seeds that make you gasp.

A chili.

## XVIII

A black dog that casts no shadow.

Tattoo marks on the  
face.

## XIX

A little brat that feeds from the plate of a  
king.

A fly.

## XX

He visits us once a year, the sadhu with one  
leg and a big hat.

A toadstool.

SHAMRAO HIVALE & VERRIER ELWIN

## ORISSA

*Bhuiya*

## I

Its stature is low, its head is bare. It is the  
brother of the water deity and it eats every-  
thing except the Fire-god.

The white ant.

## II

The creature that is born first and grows its  
legs later.

The frog.

## III

The fruit that ripens after its kernel has come  
out.

The *bhelwa*.

## IV

The god who has no temple but sits on a white  
bed with flying birds around.

The sun.

SARAT CHANDRA ROY

# Juang

## I

A man has two feet.  
A bird has two feet.  
What else has two feet ?

Tongs.

## II

The mother shakes her thin branches :  
The daughter is beautiful.

Chili.

## III

There stands the elephant.  
Into its vent the flies go one by one.

Village dormitory.

## IV

By slapping the dead she-goat you assemble  
the girls.

The *changhide-gong*.

## V

All the hill is burnt ,  
But the peahen's eggs are safe.

Stones.

## VI

The fruit swings *ludung ladang* :  
If you prick it you will be pricked.

*Bhoir* fruit.

## VII

✓ An old woman has three breasts.

A hearth.

## VIII

An old woman has four breasts.

A *bujh* basket.

## IX

At night they wander everywhere.  
 They go nowhere by day.  
 What Gaur grazes then that there is no  
 dung ?

The stars.

## X

There is a sort of hole in the middle.  
 At night it has lots of fun.  
 Here men's loins get their fodder.  
 The stick goes in and brings out light.

A lamp (or the  
 vagina).

## XI

In a corner of the house there is a rice husker.  
 It husks the grain *lusur lasar*  
 And someone pushes the rice into the hole.

The mouth, teeth  
 and tongue.

## XII

It goes slowly *rikti rikti*  
 And eats boiled rice.

A sickle.

## XIII

They wander across the hills  
 And leave a fine stick behind.

Footprints.

## XIV

The thread of the Raja's house never breaks.

A line of ants.

## XV

When it is dry, it stands up stiff  
 But when wet, it dangles to and fro.

An earthen pot.

## XVI

Water comes from a stone.

Sweat.

## XVII

It comes, it goes :  
 Who can know its way ?

The sun.

## XVIII

A thorn goes through seven layers.

A leaf-plate.

VERRIER ELWIN

*Saura*

I

The tool that cuts a piece of straw in two. *Lihana*, a carpenters' tool.

II

The Raja's curry is delicious. *Sambalna*, a poisonous insect.

III

The raja's house that is built in one night. An ant-hill.

IV

The man whose body has eight veins. *Jahni*, a vegetable.

V

The body with the children on it. Maize.

VI

The largest mouse in the village. A pig.

VII

A little girl carries a big pot. A country hearth.

VIII

The white crane with only one leg. A country umbrella.

IX

It is here, it is there but even if you give a hundred rupees you cannot get it. Lightning.

X

The young mother with the old daughter. Maize.

L. N. SAHU

## CHOTA NAGPUR

*Asur*

I

A new pot is filled and tied to a tree. A ripe fig.

II

On a hard hill is a bamboo without a joint. Hair on the head.



## III

Two of one caste are squabbling and a  
stranger puffs in the face.

The tongs, the big  
hammer and the  
bellows of a forge.

## IV

A young dog howls in the sky.

A puppy carried off  
by a crow.

## V

A bent old man poaches and a peacock calls  
to him.

A fishing hook and  
a float (made from  
a peacock's quill.)

## VI

A sick man is going ahead and a charmer is  
coming behind.

A man and a pig  
(The man is going  
to ease himself and  
the pig is following  
to eat the stools.  
He cures the man  
by eating what is  
making him uneasy.)

## VII

A tree without leaves falls and the guests  
come.

Stools.

## VIII

It stands like a post but when it flowers, it  
bends its branches.

A plantain.

## IX

In a field the earth is scraped.

A threshing floor.

## X

A dog without an ear goes from house to  
house.

A *paila* (or grain  
measure).

## XI

A crow pecks at a ripe plantain.

A bar smiting a piece  
of red hot iron.

## XII

In a field is scattered mould.

A mousehole.

## XIII

The sloping hut with the two doors.

The nose.

## XIV

Water from a rock.

Sweat on the forehead.

## XV

A hundred branches of a single trunk.

A market.

## XVI

The hollow drum with a price in the rains.

A big bamboo basket for storing grain.

## XVII

The man whose forehead has been caught.

A coulter in a plough

## XVIII

The woman who vomits flour.

A grinding stone.

## XIX

The two snakes that mutter in a single hole.

The hollow bamboos connecting up the furnace.

## XX

The woman who early in the morning wears a white cloth.

The pot in which the rice is boiled and the rice scum which boils up over it.

## XXI

The son who puts a spinning-peg up his stupid father.

The *mahua* flower (the flower is fitted into a sheath).

## XXII

The fluttering dove that flies away and does not return.

A letter.

## XXIII

The little thing that neither breaks nor  
tears.

A cocoon.

## XXIV

The man who eats as he bathes.

The *Kilkila* (a kind  
of water bird).

## XXV

The country where all the tribes have one  
name.

Shadows.

## XXVI

The seven ranis with the single anus.

Garlic.

## XXVII

The mangy mare that lets a fart.

A drum.

## XXVIII

The black goat that goes from house to  
house.

A pot of rice-beer.

## XXIX

The old woman who says *baba baba* in the  
morning.

Splitting firewood.

## XXX

Two bears that sleep apart but get together  
when they fart.

A pair of bellows.

## XXXI

The handful of mustard seeds that cannot be  
counted.

Stars.

## XXXII

The five brothers that cross the white stone.

Eating rice.

## XXXIII

The diamond in the sky who is the wife of  
everybody's younger brother.

The sun. (The wife  
of a younger brother  
cannot be touched.)

## XXXIV

The piece of sal wood that is cut in two and  
never comes together.

The earth and the  
sky.

## XXXV

The rice which is tasty without any salt      Tobacco and lime.

## XXXVI

Two old men who bend each other in the  
early morning.      The twyers of a  
bellows.

## XXXVII

Lowly its caste  
Strong its teeth.      A white ant.

## XXXVIII

Bitter the fruit.  
Sweet the flower.      Mahua.

## XXXIX

Going I kicked it over  
Coming I found it up again.      An ant-hill.

## XL

Unripe and apart  
Ripe and all in one.      An earthen pot.

## XLI

One while ploughing  
Two while leaving.      A tooth-twig.

## XLII

Rough the body  
And its flesh in a leaf-cup.      Jack fruit.

## XLIII

You are always going and leaving me  
behind.      A footprint.

## XLIV

A chapatti was split among fourteen persons  
and the last man got it whole.      The moon.

## XLV

It cuts a thousand bamboos in a single blow.      A razor.

## XLVI

The cotton tree that points to the sky has  
only one joint.      Hookah.

## XLVII

Get up, barking deer  
There is hair stuck in your body. Mahua flower.

## XLVIII

On a bent sal tree, a clod of earth is pressing. The head pillowed  
on an arm.

## XLIX

The animal without a bone or a head. A leach.

## L

The animal who never has its hair cut. A bear.

W. G. ARCHER

*Birhor*

## I

A bullock tethered in a jungle. A silk-cocoon.

## II

A spear planted in a jungle. The stem of a  
bamboo.

## III

The boy who strikes himself in the morning. The eye-lid.

## IV

The boy that rolls on the ground in the morning. The broom.

## V

Storks on a piece of high land. Maize cooking in a  
broken earthen pot.

SARAT CHANDRA ROY

*Kharia*

## I

A cup upside down in a lonely jungle. A toadstool.

## II

The rotten parrot with the cut feathers. A leaf waterproof.

## III

The village with only one head. A village spring.

## IV

The single rider on the two horses.      Bellows.

## V

The girl with three breasts.      A country hearth.

## VI

The clod of earth with seven holes.      A man's head.

## VII

A hundred shoots in a single bush.      A market.

## VIII

The old woman with flesh inside, bones  
outside and a tail on her head.      A leaf waterproof.

## IX

The tree with the birds' nests.      *Mahua* flowers.

## X

The black goat with the white blood.      A pot of rice beer.

## XI

The rotten lizard with a good taste.      A plantain.

## XII

The hill full of stones.      Marrow.

## XIII

The straight thing with a heavy buttock.      The pole of a well.

## XIV

A girl who is beaten as soon as she is born  
but never, once the *sindur* is on her.      An earthen pot.

## XV

A girl who can eat but can only ease herself  
when she is made to.      A fishing trap.

## XVI

The split tongue and the cut mouth whose  
work rules the land.      A pen.

## XVII

An old woman who gathers rice for rice  
beer.      A field mouse and its  
mould.

## XVIII

The crippled old woman who cuts the jungle. A sickle.

## XIX

The bullock that grazes on a hill and drinks  
the water of a tank. A barber's razor.

## XX

The buried rupee that goes to fight in a  
foreign land. A root.

## XXI

The old woman who sits down with a turban. A pot cooking rice.

## XXII

√ The girl who clothes herself in a bandage. A young bamboo  
shoot.

## XXIII

√ The thin leaf that roams the country. A letter.

## XXIV

The son dances at his father's marriage. A *sal* fruit whirling  
down from the tree.

## XXV

The woman who bears the same kind of  
children all the twelve months. A fig tree.

## XXVI

The old woman who dives into boiling water. A country spoon.

## XXVII

The white old lady who is always sitting. A marrow.

## XXVIII

The man who always goes by the side. Shadow.

## XXIX

The goat who is tied to the back. A lock of hair.

## XXX

The thin thread that is a house to live in and  
a net to catch with. A spider's web.

## XXXI

√ The girl who danced a lot and went to sleep  
in a corner. A pestle.

## XXXII

The old woman who drags an old man.

Plastering a house  
with cow dung.

## XXXIII

The twelve deer with the three legs who graze  
apart.

The months and the  
seasons.

## XXXIV

You are ten but you fear me.

A tiger and men.

## XXXV

It flows with flowing water and sits with  
stagnant.

Sand.

## XXXVI

It grows in the sun and dries in the shade.

Sweat.

## XXXVII

Three legs on the earth, one leg in the sky,  
and it is raining without a cloud.

A dog.

## XXXVIII

From the north comes an old man who carries  
a load on his buttocks.

A dung beetle.

## XXXIX

The dry gourd cracks but the stalk stays.

Men die but their  
names remain.

## XL

It hurts as it goes in but once it is in, it  
delights.

Putting on a bangle.

## XLI

Sleep you must but go in through me first.

A door.

## XLII

As you get up, I will get up with you. When  
you stand, I will stand. When you sit  
again, I will sit. But when you lie down  
for sleeping, I shall not come.

The breasts.

## XLIII

A stick ends the quarrel between the sun  
and the moon.

Lock and key.



## XLIV

A headless man squats at the door.

A crab.

## XLV

A rotten sheep drinks water.

A rag for washing  
floors with cow  
dung.

## XLVI

The moon sizzles in the footprint of an  
elephant.

A chapatti in a pan.

## XLVII

The black paddy ripens in the jungle.

A date palm.

## XLVIII

A spring gushes from a stone.

Sweat.

## XLIX

An old man makes a ridge in the sky.

Rainbow.

## L

When I come you go away.

The sun and the  
moon.*Munda*

## I

A tattered winnowing-fan swaggers with  
pride.

A plantain leaf.

## II

A man builds a house without a door.

A silkworm cocoon.

## III

Within the pit the children of the pit are  
dancing.

Rice being cooked.

## IV

Water issues from a dry tree trunk.

An oil press.

## V

A little minivet lightens the whole house.

A country lamp.

## VI

It shines in the sky and thuds on the ground. A mattock.

## VII

A hollowed hen is clucking.

A wooden cowbell.

## VIII

✓ A heron sits on a dry tree.

An axe.

## IX

The limping headman digs a well.

A crab.

## X

A red girl laughs in a hollow.

Fire.

## XI

The hub of a country cart cries *maung maung*. A cat.

## XII

By the side of a river a kite stretches its wings.

A fishing net.

## XIII

In the middle of the jungle a cup has been put upside down.

A tiger's pug mark.

## XIV

The witch-finder with a head like a dog shakes with ecstasy.

The fruit of the *sal* tree.

## XV

The hole of the coppersmith says *keon cheon*.

The hub of a country cart.

## XVI

The little pot of a witch floats in the river.

A frog.

## XVII

In a dense jungle the bongas have stood a drum on end.

A tiger's head.

## XVIII

A white bull is tethered in a jungle.

A cocoon.

## XIX

Grumbling in the stomach of an elephant.

A house.

## XX

Goats flowing in a stream.

Water weed.

## XXI

The snake that feeds her children from many  
breasts.

The central beam of  
a house.

## XXII

The man who always lifts his legs to the  
sky.

A necklace (beads  
pointed outwards.)

## XXIII

A bundle of leaves that hangs from the  
flesh.

An ear-plug.

## XXIV

The pot of oil that shines.

The nose of a bul-  
lock.

## XXV

The man who is quite white.

Cloth.

## XXVI

The man who is thrown away in the hot  
weather and picked up in the rains.

Paddy.

## XXVII

The five brothers who go into a narrow hole  
together.

Five fingers into the  
mouth.

## XXVIII

The man who cries when his ear is pulled.

A gun.

## XXIX

The man whose belly is empty at home and  
filled in the fields.

A bow.

## XXX

Two snakes that go in and out of a single hole.

Two women pound-  
ing rice with pestles  
in a single mortar.

## XXXI

The levelling board that five men press.

A comb.

## XXXII

The woman who dances without a drum.

A woman working  
a pair of bellows.

## XXXIII

The two men who walk through the world day  
and night.

The sun and the  
moon.

## XXXIV

The cart ox that goes underground.

The white ant.

## XXXV

The bent old woman who plunges in a pool.

A fishing rod.

## XXXVI

The fishing rod that waves when you whistle.

A dog's tail.

## XXXVII

Behind each house are the bowels of an  
elephant.

Straw ropes.

## XXXVIII

Up and down it goes and raises a ridge.

Needle and thread.

## XXXIX

They flash as they go ahead.

Tails of mice.

## XL

The belly of an elephant is long and slack.

A house.

## XLI

The rat runs away but its bowels are trapped.

A weaver's shuttle.

## XLII

The vulture with the single wing.

An oil press.

## XLIII

The water-snake with a head at both its ends.

The main beam in a  
house.

## XLIV

Two threshing floors on a sloping hill.

A bullock's flanks.

## XLV

The snake with a head at both its ends.

A carrier's pole.

## XLVI

The she-buffaloe without any legs.

A snake.

## XLVII

The women of the village with the bearded  
babies on their backs.

Maize.

## XLVIII

The two women with one bell round their  
necks.

A pair of tongs.

## XLIX

A pair of fans on the side of a hill.

A bullock's ears.

## L

A necklace of pearls floating in a river.

Fishes' eyes.

*Uraon*

## I

The moon sizzles in the centre of a tank.

A chapatti in a pan.

## II

In a tree on an anthill is the nest of a bulbul.

A hookah.

## III

A tiger roars as it pulls a creeper.

A handloom.

## IV

A parrot plays on the dry stump of a tree.

An axe.

## V

A mouse frolics between two fences.

A weaver's shuttle.

## VI

The glinting fish raises a mound.

A needle making a  
seam.

## VII

A kid springs between two mats.

A weaver's shuttle.

## VIII

A headless goat gapes at the sky.

Paddy stubble.

## IX

A mint leaf sits on a swaying head.

A cobra.

## X

In the belly of an elephant the mainas chirp.

A house with child-  
ren.

## XI

An old barber has a house with no doors.

A silk cocoon.

## XII

The red flag flutters once a year.

The flower of the  
cotton tree.

## XIII

A brown cow lows in the middle of a field.

A drum.

## XIV

A thousand lights in a dish.

Stars.

## XV

The boy with the hundred eyes behind.

A peacock.

## XVI

The bashful girl who stays behind.

A comb in the hair.

## XVII

The dove with its head on one side.

A rafter.

## XVIII

The white sandalwood that fades at once.

Hail.

## XIX

The white flag that flutters once a year.

Thatching grass.

## XX

The black cow is sleeping  
The red cow is licking.

A black pot on a  
fire.

## XXI

A girl tidies a room and goes to the back of  
the house.

A comb.

## XXII

With one ear of corn the house is full.

The flame of a lamp.

## XXIII

The flower that opens in the rain and closes  
when the rain is over.

An umbrella.

## XXIV

Although it has no flesh, it lives.

A leech.

## XXV

The younger brother with the sharp teeth  
The elder brother with the sharp eyes.

The white ant and  
vulture.

## XXVI

The bitten tassel that prods from hole to  
hole.

A country tooth-  
stick.

## XXVII

The old woman who makes a leaf cup as she  
comes and goes.

Foot print.

## XXVIII

The little bird that does not fear a raja.

An eye fly.

## XXIX

The man with teeth in his belly.

A sickle.

## XXX

Silent when apart  
Crying when together.

Cymbals.

## XXXI

Eat and drink it can  
But walk it cannot.

A tree.

## XXXII

Water springs from a dry piece of wood.

An oil press.

## XXXIII

The golden parrot with the silver beak  
Drinks water through its tail.

A country lamp.

## XXXIV

A fish jumps in a cup of water.

The tongue.

## XXXV

When she reaches the age of her mother, the  
daughter wears her hair long.

A bamboo.

## XXXVI

The black bitch that jumps when kicked on  
the hill.

A rice pounder.

## XXXVII

The boy who always carries a bent stick.

A dog and its tail.

## XXXVIII

In a closed tank is the leaf of a *pipal*.

The mouth and the  
tongue.

## XXXIX

The brown cow that starts to graze in a  
corner.

Fire.

## XL

The little garden is lovely as a blossom.

A country lamp.

## XLI

A small hut in the centre of a hill.

The nose.

## XLII

An elephant with hoofs on its knees.

A grasshopper.

## XLIII

The elephant pounds it  
The horse levels it.

A rice pounder.

## XLIV

It cries in the lap  
And is silent on the ground.

A drum.

## XLV

The man who grows a beard before he cuts  
his teeth.

Maize.

## XLVI

Fire rises from a dry piece of wood.

A gun.

## XLVII

The girl with the round little body works the  
pounder, while the red girl gives the grain. Mouth and tongue.

## XLVIII

The trunk of a tree on an anthill  
In the trunk of the tree a nest  
And in the nest an egg.

A hookah.

## XLIX

A calf tied out in a deserted field.

A mushroom.

## L

The boy who dives as soon as he leaves his  
bed.

The bucket of a well.



*Rajput-Kayesth*

## I

Day and night it lives in water  
 It has no flesh or bones  
 It does a sword's work.  
 And back it goes to water.

A potter's thread  
 with which he trims  
 a pot.

## II

Her mother lives in water  
 Her father lives in the sky  
 O friend ! I want it  
 Send it to me.

A pearl. (A pearl is  
 formed by a rain-  
 drop of *Swati na-*  
*chatra* falling into  
 a shell).

## III

From here to there  
 But not in this country  
 I shall eat a fruit  
 Without a skin.

A hail-stone.

## IV

Rain in the night  
 And all the jungle wet  
 The pitcher cannot be dipped in water  
 And the birds go thirsty.

Dew.

## V

The sun and moon are fighting  
 O stars, come and part them.

A lock and key.

## VI

Sweet words he talks  
 And every one likes him  
 Come old or young  
 All bow before him.

A barber.

## VII

Its body is white as jute  
 Its smell is strong  
 O merchant weigh me a little  
 My mother-in-law has sent me for it.

Camphor.

## VIII

White its spots  
And black its teeth  
Kiss it  
And it weeps and wails.

A conch.

## IX

In the sun it did not dry  
In the shade it dwindles  
Tell me what it is  
It dies at the wind's touch.

Sweat.

## X

Damp with dew  
And wet with water  
Who is the rani  
That picks this flower ?

Paddy.

## XI

It minces as it goes  
And wears a yellow silk  
Forty are its feet  
And forty five its legs.

A centipede.

## XII

Three leaves together  
But not a *bel*  
The flower yellow  
The fruit black  
Gods are not offered it  
Now tell me its name.

A *rahar* plant.

## XIII

Stone on a stone  
Two pice on a pebble  
It makes a house without water  
What is this mason ?

The white ant.

## XIV

A bird has come  
And eaten all the paddy  
It has cleaned itself on a ridge  
It has hidden itself in a nest.

A razor.

## XV

Fair the body  
 Dark the face  
 By a pond they live  
 In the fight they are the first  
 They are two heroes  
 But they have only one name. The breasts.

## XVI

Pretty she is  
 And full of virtue  
 Clever she looks  
 Thousands of miles she comes  
 And she says  
 The words of the heart. A letter.

## XVII

When her hand is caught  
 Yes yes yes she says  
 When it's half gone on  
 She starts to cry  
 When it's fully on  
 How glad she is. Bangle.

## XVIII

Lovely to look at  
 And full of virtue  
 A stone on the head  
 A finger in the mouth. A ring. (Gold is good for health.)

## XIX

Long its tail.  
 But not a squirrel  
 Two its horns  
 But not a cow  
 It goes to the sky  
 And makes a pretty tune. A kite.

## XX

In a hollow of fire  
 She built her house  
 In water  
 She made doors  
 Behind a screen  
 She gives to her husband. A Hookah.

## XXI

He rides on the nose  
He catches the ears  
What rogue is this ?

Spectacles.

## XXII

Water inside  
Water in the temple  
Men who can guess it  
Are very very clever.

A hookah.

## XXIII

Red it is but not a cock  
Green it is but not a peacock  
It has a long tail but is not a monkey  
It is a horse with four legs.

A tree lizard.

## XXIV

River on this side  
River on that side  
Eddies in the middle  
Inside a jogi is stretching  
And the eddies dance around.

A churning machine.

## XXV

Soft when unripe  
Hard when it ripens  
This fruit abounds  
In the land of earth.

A pot.

## XXVI

Once it was small  
Then it grew up  
Now it wears  
A necklace of pearls  
But who can guess it ?

Maize.

## XXVII

We get one every day  
A raja rarely  
God never.

An equal.

## XXVIII

Lamps she burns  
Four posts she moves  
And she dangles a cobra.

An elephant.

## XXIX

Full for four months  
Empty for eight months  
O my love  
Solve this riddle.

A drain.

## XXX

A woman flirts with a man  
But is known to be chaste  
She climbs on Vishnu's head  
But she has no shame.

A *tulsi* plant.

## XXXI

I live on a tree  
But am not a bird  
Three eyes have I  
But I am not Shankar,

A coconut.

## XXXII

Wonder of wonders  
She laughed at the wonder  
The child with no father  
Was born with no mother.

Kush, the son whom  
Valmiki substituted  
when Sita and  
her son were miss-  
ing.

## XXXIII

The red goddess who rises from the little  
well.

*Pua* (a kind of  
food.)

## XXXIV

The Babu whose nose is not straight.

Gram.

## XXXV

The carefree man who gets his food with-  
out moving.

A tree.

## XXXVI

The small egg that is longer than a palm  
tree.

A cocoon.

## XXXVII

The strange creature with the wonderful  
tail.

A scorpion.

## XXXVIII

Five fingers with neither hands nor feet.

A cow-dung cake  
with the impression  
of a hand.

## XXXIX

The little hare with the twitching ears that  
gives one views of all the world.

A letter.

## XL

The Muslim who comes out of the mosque  
with two doors.

Blowing the nose.

## XLI

The brother with the string in his nose who  
goes from house to house.

A needle and thread.

## XLII

Their legs are on top of one another and  
they look at the hole.

A grinding-stone.

## XLIII

The deer stands while the pond is full. The  
deer runs away when the pond dries.

Oil and wick.

## XLIV

The ticks are tiny and go inside. When the  
woman is tired, her legs are pulled apart.

A tooth twig.

## XLV

The mother is a lump of country sugar, the  
daughter is a stone, the son is fat.

A pumpkin.

## XLVI

A little dove with a fat belly. Go away,  
little dove. How big a field can you des-  
troy?

A sickle.

## XLVII

The black blanket which the dear one takes  
away and not for eighty rupees can it be  
sold.

The eye.

## XLVIII

You went home and every thing was red.

Sindur.

## XLIX

It flowers in *Sawan*, bears fruit in *Chait*  
but even the parrots do not eat its fruit.

*Babul*.

## L

Who kisses the flowers when they dangle?  
Who catches them when they fall?

Water and stars.

*Muslim*

## I

The tree with the drums.

Jackfruit.

## II

A little haldi that yellows all the huts.

A lamp.

## III

The old woman who goes to sleep after having  
her bath.

A pot (a pot is  
washed at night  
after the meal).

## IV

The seven ranis with the single nose.

Garlic.

## V

The goat with a hole in its nose.

A needle.

## VI

Go if you must. But why must you knock  
me down?

Blowing the nose.

## VII

The woman who eases herself bit by bit.

A grinding stone.

## VIII

The little cow that gives pots of milk.

Mustard.

## IX

The black thing that plays, drinks the red  
water and blesses the minister.

Louse.

## X

The white girl who quarrels with the saheb.

A rupee.

## BIHAR

*Sauria Paharia*

## I

A fountain of water among thirty-two  
boulders.

Saliya.

## II

A black pot falls from the sky.

The fruit of a palmyra palm.

## III

Half sun  
Half shadow.

A cat.

## IV

The four men who never get wet however  
much it rains.

A cow's teats.

## V

Sickles fall from the sky.

Tamarind fruit.

## VI

The man who eats and eases with his mouth.

A snail.

## VII

Two dry poles on a live body.

Horns.

## VIII

Legs up  
Head down.

Bat.

## IX

The man who raises his head when he drinks.  
water.

A fowl.

## X

The man with eyes on his back.

Finger and nails.

## XI

A girl is dancing down the sky.

The fruit of a *sal*  
tree.

## XII

The raja's goats graze on the black grass.

Scissors.

## XIII

A black leopard in a black jungle.

A louse.

## XIV

The man who always laughs as he walks.

A fresh water mus-  
sel.

## XV

A boy weeps from hill to hill.

A flute.



## XVI

The girl with an eye in her bottom.

A needle.

*Santal*

## I

The father is in the mother's body, the  
children have gone to sell clothes.

The cotton plant.

## II

The lapwing in the rains with only one leg.

A bamboo umbrella.

## III

A little bird flies about in the thicket of slim  
bamboos.

Lice.

## IV

The jungle quail goes *hisir hisir*, the bird  
with the colour of haldi goes *tap tap*.

Razor and Scissors.

## V

The water of five rivers will come out  
through a single hole.

The udders of a  
cow.

## VI

The black Saheb of Calcutta has hair within  
his bones.

The fruit of a palm.

## VII

The she-buffaloe is of wood, the buffaloe  
calf is of earth and the milk drips from the  
string.

A toddy palm with  
a toddy pot tied  
to it.

## VIII

She plasters her house with cowdung and  
throws the rest at her door.

Crab.

## IX

The raja's plate which you cannot wash.

A coiled up snake.

## X

The earthen pot upside down in the rivers.

Turtle.

## XI

The withered cotton tree has fallen and the  
bridal leaders have arrived. Excreta and beetles.

## XII

Old teeth that waggle. Tamarind pods.

## XIII

The Diku girls who cook their rice in the  
leaves. Red ants (that lay  
eggs on leaves.)

## XIV

A man is always lying down but gets up  
when a thread is put in his bottom. Needle.

## XV

When the dead ox lows the fence begins to  
shake. *Tumduk* (drum) and  
girls dancing.

## XVI

The little fruit-lark with the red legs. Chili.

## XVII

The bird that makes a nest with its buttocks. Needle.

## XVIII

The coiled up bowels. Paddy rope.

## XIX

Silver the branch, little the seed, big the  
tree. *Pipal* tree.

## XX

The two men who are always beating each  
other. The lips.

## XXI

A moon weeps in the middle of a tank. A cake of flour  
simmering in oil.

## XXII

The fried white pulse in the little pot. Teeth and mouth.

## XXIII

The black string on the path. Oil ants.

## XXIV

A white flower blossoms on a dead tree.

The feather on a  
bridal drum.

## XXV

A boy says in the morning : Come, father, and  
gather up the crane's eggs.

Gathering *mahua*  
flowers.

## XXVI

The black dog that loiters in the rivers.

Leech.

## XXVII

The woman who always ties her black goat  
to the back of the house.

A way of doing the  
hair.

## XXVIII

The white rolling pin is drowned  
And the cotton floats.

Rice and bubbles.

## XXIX

The hobby horse from the jungle on whom  
the women soldiers canter.

Rice pounder.

## XXX

He has a crown but is not a king  
He wakes men but is not a sepoy.

A cock.

## XXXI

The elephant's eggs that are like a drum.

A cocoanut.

## XXXII

A rabbit runs without a tail  
A dog goes after with no legs  
A man without a head looks on.

Frog, snake and  
crab.

## XXXIII

In a dry tree the cockscomb flower.

Fungus on a tree  
stump.

## XXXIV

The white soldiers who lie downwards.

Bats.

## XXXV

I press you when sleeping at evening,  
I rise and desert you in the morning,  
A little later I drag you out.

A cot.

## XXXVI

The water of four rice lands in a single field.    The udders of a cow.

## XXXVII

It enters the house but is not a thief  
It enters the cowshed but is not a leopard.    A mosquito.

## XXXVIII

Two brothers and both are black.    Eyes.

## XXXIX

The bird with a tail on both its sides.    A leaf cup.

## XL

The buffalo that sits in the rivers.    A boulder.

## XLI

The dove's pot at the back of the house.    An ear-ring.

## XLII

The man who speaks when his belly is  
tickled.    A violin.

## XLIII

The old man's tooth that dangles.    Mango.

## XLIV

When the string round his loins is pulled,  
the boy weeps.    The pole of a well.

## XLV

The boy who cries when he is kissed.    A flute.

## XLVI

The woman who has a child every month.    Fig tree.

## XLVII

Without a drum it dances and every time it  
eats it bathes.    A kingfisher.

## XLVIII

On a hillock a gleaming fish is roaming.    A razor.

## XLIX

The bird that lays eggs with its mouth.    A snail.

## L

A man like a raja died and no one mourned  
him.

A snake.

W. G. ARCHER

*Muslim*

## I

Waters of two colours in a single china pot.

An egg.

## II

There lives a red lady,  
In a tiny little case.

*Masur*, a form of  
pulse.

## III

A little girl with a twisted nose.

Gram.

## IV

An earthen horse  
An iron saddle  
And riding over it  
A bloated doctor.

*Roti*.

## V

Black is the cow  
It eats black grains  
The calf flew off  
And left the cow.

A gun.

## VI

There is a bird  
It sits along a river  
Drinks water with its claws  
Holds communion with God.

A kerosene lantern.

## VII

A single clod of earth in a whole expanse of  
meadows.

The moon.

## VIII

She is happy, she is content  
She is laden with a lac and a quarter of pearls  
She stands in the King's garden  
Wrapping herself in a pair of shawls.

A maize cob.

## IX

Pulp of turmeric  
In a lota of brass  
If you cannot solve this  
You are the son of a monkey.

A *bel* fruit.

## X

A handful of puffed rice is scattered all over  
but no one can pick any of it up.

Stars.

## XI

Twelve compartments in a little box, and in  
each of them, thirty partitions.

The year, the month  
and the days.

## XII

Pick me up take me up  
Five brothers, turn back  
I am going away.

A morsel of food  
eaten with the  
fingers.

## XIII

Fire in one lane  
Smoke in another  
One village is on fire  
And the well is in another.

A hubble-bubble  
(hookah).

## XIV

The son was born after the death of his father. Smoke.

## XV

Red, red, red  
Fruiting in bunches  
Children of poor men say  
Oh father, Oh mother.

Red chilies. (Poor  
men eat them raw  
with rice).

## XVI

Spread is the mat  
There is none to sleep  
Pierced is the King,  
There is none to weep  
The flowers are in bloom  
There is none to pick.

Water, cobra, stars.

## XVII

Four pillars are standing  
Two fans are moving  
Two lamps are lighted  
And a cobra plays within.

Elephant.

## XVIII

Four standing  
Four lying  
Each holding two.

A bedstead.

## XIX

In a jungle I saw a tree  
The heart became restless  
Open is the grief for Hasan  
Hidden is the grief for Husain.

A hena leaf.

## XX

A little worm  
Clamps one down  
Pulls a bow  
And shoots an arrow.

A scorpion.

## XXI

Two trunks to a tree  
Two branches and ten fruits  
Such a tree I never saw  
Though I searched through all the lanes.

A human being.

## XXII

A four legged bat  
Hangs from the roof  
Keeps food in its belly  
For us all to eat.

A *chinka*.

## XXIII

I am a cake  
You do not eat me  
But I keep you clean  
Tell me what I am.

Soap.

## XXIV

I am long and flat  
I have teeth as well  
All use me  
Say what I am.

A comb.

## XXV

The red queen in the red palace  
Tell me, friend, the riddle of my story.

The tongue.

## XXVI

Two gems, queer they are  
Half black and half white.                      Eyes.

## XXVII

It breaks when it is named  
But lies I do not tell.                      Silence.

## XXVIII

What is it that we always want and forget  
when it comes to us ?                      Sleep.

## XXIX

Pour milk in, pour water in  
And it gives you nothing back.                      A sieve.

## XXX

What is that word  
Which is never pronounced right ?                      Wrong.

## XXXI

A black mouthed one turns somersault  
Dances head over heels  
Drowns its head in a pot  
And quietly tells the secrets of the heart.                      Pen.

## XXXII

Black it is but not a crow  
It crawls on trees but it is not a snake  
Slender is its waist but not a panther.                      A black ant.

## XXXIII

On a green branch  
Sat a green pigeon  
And its neck was black  
Scholars and gardeners  
Alone can solve it.                      *Jamun.*

## XXXIV

A strange bird I saw  
In the jungle it revels  
Flies with the mind's secrets  
On land and water  
Carries tales from one to another  
Tells good or evil  
Spins the world on its finger.                      A telegram.

## XXXV

Stone on the head  
Finger in the stomach.                      A ring.



## XXXVI

Black as soot  
It sits on a green branch  
Who can solve this riddle ?                      A *jamun* berry.

## XXXVII

Four birds of four hues  
In a cage all change to one colour.                      Chewing betel.

## XXXVIII

Its mind and body are the same  
Eight bodies it has  
Heads forty, legs a hundred and sixty.                      A maund.

## XXXIX

All in the house were burnt  
But not a string  
All in the house were-caught  
But the house ran away through the ring.                      A fishing net.

## XL

The Maharani who stands between  
strings of pearls.                      Tongue.

S. M. NAQAVI

## BENGAL

## (a) BIRBHUM DISTRICT

## I

The deity with a hundred heads  
Drinks water by its legs.                      Paddy plants.

## II

It comes on the back, 'it goes on the back  
It is beaten for no fault of its own.                      Drum.

## III

Houses here, houses there  
A weaver's house in the middle  
Though the old man has six scores of  
grandsons  
His wife is pregnant again.                      *Papiya* plant.

## IV

Leafy the plant  
And a conch lies beneath it.                      Radish.

## V

*Sain suin satka*

Three hands and ten legs.

A cow, a calf and  
the man that milks  
the cow.

## VI

It is not a creeper, nor a twining plant  
It creeps up and up  
And eats away the eyes.

Smoke.

## VII

They left and left the house  
But they left behind five fingers.

Cowdung cakes.

## VIII

A single dove with two heads that goes to  
Calcutta.

Boat.

## IX

The dove comes  
The dove goes  
The dove stands  
When it finds water.

Shoes.

## X

On the tiny plant  
Dances a red constable.

Chili.

## XI

A parrot comes from the jungle with a  
helmet dangling on its head.

Hen.

## XII

A tiger comes from the jungle with a noose  
in its nose and a stripe on its back.

A pair of scales.

## XIII

A noisy machine squeaks  
And pus trickles down its beard.Oil-pressing machine.  
A. K. MITRA

## (b) BIRBHUM DISTRICT

## I

It shines when it is raised up and looks very  
beautiful when it falls down. It kills many  
animals but it does not eat any of them. A fishing-net.

## II

A parrot has come from the forest with a red  
cap on its head.

Onion.

## III

I always keep a small piece of cloth with me  
but I can never keep it dry. Tongue.

## IV

Many constables with red turbans are dancing  
on a shrub. Red-pepper.

## V

I do not move when I am born. Egg.

## VI

My eyes are open when I sleep. Fish.

## VII

Though it has no strength in its legs it follows  
you like a pet dog and never dies. None  
can find it if it hides in darkness. But it  
cannot hide itself when there is light.  
Sometimes it grows as big as a giant and  
some times it becomes as small as a dwarf.  
Do you know who this magician is ? Shadow.

N. D. SINHA

## (c) HOOGHLY AND BURDWAN DISTRICTS

## I

I live in complete seclusion  
But I am not a woman.  
I cannot stand the heat of the sun  
So delicate I am. Betel leaf.

## II

It worships Vishnu but is not a Vaishnav  
It is not the leaf of a tree but has leaves on  
its body. Bird.

## III

The Mallika (jasmine) flowers are in bloom  
And all the children are running for them. Boiled rice.

## IV

I have many brothers and we live in the same  
room  
We have a turban on the head but nothing  
on the body.  
When we come out of the room we dash our  
heads against a wall  
And that is the end of my story. A matchstick.

## V

The room ran away through the window  
And the householder was locked within.

Fish caught in the  
net.

## VI

A word of three letters  
It is found in every room.

Omit the first letter, it is a delicious food

Omit the middle and it is full of divine music

Omit the third and everyone is afraid of it. Bichhana, bed.

B. B. MUKHERJEE

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 NOTE

Of the riddles given in this riddle book, the Juang, Saura, Asur, Kharia, Munda, Sauria Paharia, Santal, Muslim, Bengali and certain of the Uraon riddles are published for the first time. Of the remainder, the Agaria and Baiga riddles are from Verrier Elwin's *The Agaria* (Oxford University Press, 1942) and *The Baiga* (Murray, 1939) while the Muria riddles are from his forthcoming book *The Muria and their Ghotul* (Oxford University Press). The Gond riddles are reproduced from *Songs of the Forest* (Allen and Unwin, 1935) and the Birhor and Bhuiya riddles from Sarat Chandra Roy's *The Birhors* (Man in India, Ranchi, 1925) and *The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa* (Man in India, Ranchi, 1935). Certain Uraon riddles are from *The Blue Grove* (Allen and Unwin, 1940).

To the publishers of these books we make the fullest acknowledgments.

The sources of the riddles are given in these publications but in the case of riddles which are now printed for the first time, the sources are as follows: Asur, Kharia, Munda, Uraon and Muslim (Chota Nagpur), Ranchi District, Chota Nagpur; Santal and Sauria Paharia, the Santal Parganas, Bihar; Muslim (Bihar), the Tirhut Division, North Bihar; Juang, Keonjar State. The riddles which have been termed Rajput-Kayesth are from the Palamau District of Chota Nagpur and are common to almost all the upper castes of that area.

W. G. ARCHER

# EXTRACTS FROM A RIDDLE NOTE-BOOK

BY VERRIER ELWIN AND W. G. ARCHER

## I

### A NOTE ON THE USE OF RIDDLES IN INDIA

ASKING *brahmodya* or poetical riddles was a very ancient practice in India and formed part of the Ashvamedha horse-sacrifice. Just before the actual smothering of the horse, the Hotri and the Brahmin began to ask riddles, an exercise in which only they were permitted to take part. This ceremonial use of the riddle is found in many parts of the world, and Frazer has suggested that it may have originally been adopted at times when for certain reasons the speaker was forbidden the use of direct terms.<sup>1</sup>

Among the aboriginals the custom is found at the beginning of the marriage ceremony in certain tribes. In Gond and Pardhan weddings in Mandla, for example, when the bridegroom's representative goes to fetch the bride, riddles are posed and must be answered before he can take her away.

Among the preliminaries to a Birhor marriage there is also a time when riddles are put and answered. When the bride's party comes to the bridegroom's house, hunting-nets are spread for the guests to sit on. When they are seated, the bridegroom's people ask them, 'What did you see on your way here?' The guests reply, 'On the way, we met with a girl and asked her, "Where is your father gone?" The girl answered, "My father is gone to catch the rains of heaven." This meant he had gone to gather thatching-grass. Then we asked her, "Where is your mother gone?" The girl answered, "She is gone to take a dead person inside the house." This meant she had gone to transplant paddy-seedlings as a labourer.'

The bride's people now say, 'O friends! A mango tree bore fruit; an old woman told her husband, "Get me the mango by throwing a stick at it" (meaning, get me rice-beer to drink). The old man threw a stick at it and the mango fell and the stick came down on the other side of the tree striking down a deer as it fell' (suggesting, let a goat be slain for our entertainment). Men of each party now greet those of the other party and enquire about their health and well-being. Then riddles of a certain type known as *ganamrea bhanita* are asked and solved. For this occasion, five jars of rice-beer were already set abrewing on the return of the three men who had gone to the bride's house for the Tak-

<sup>1</sup> I. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, Vol. IX, p. 121.

chanrhi ceremony. One of these pots of rice-beer is now brought out to the court, strained, and distributed to the guests. This is called 'the fatigue-removing jar.'<sup>1</sup>

In Roy's description of an Oraon marriage he gives one section as Khiri Tengna (propounding riddles). This is the time at which the marriage sermon is given and rice-beer, which is called 'riddle-propounding rice-beer,' is given to bride and bridegroom, though they must not drink it. The marriage sermon commences with a riddle, but Roy does not make it clear whether during the drinking of the beer riddles are proposed and answered by the guests.<sup>2</sup>

In the great Saila dancing competitions in Mandla when villagers visit one another and dance against each other, the songs used sometimes take the form of riddles which must be answered by the other party as one aspect of the competition. This is in the ancient Indian tradition of the wit-combat. Penzer points out that these combats, which sometimes took the form of a series of riddles, were a common feature of entertainments at the courts of Asiatic monarchs.<sup>3</sup> The reader will at once be reminded of the story of the Queen of Sheba who 'came to prove the wisdom of Solomon with hard questions',<sup>4</sup> of Samson and his riddle, and of the riddle of the Sphinx.

In Indian fiction there is a rather disappointing account of a wit-combat in Somadeva's *Katha Sarit Sagara* where a learned Princess is defeated by Vinitamati. But later this same Vinitamati is himself vanquished in dispute by a Buddhist mendicant. In Parshvanatha's account of Vikrama's adventures as a parrot, there is a well-known series of riddles.<sup>5</sup> The story of 'Abu Al-Husn and his Slave-Girl Tawaddud' in *The Arabian Nights* (Burton, Vol. V, pp. 189 ff) is on the same lines.

But in India perhaps the most common use of the riddle has been as a fiction motif. The posing of a riddle is a useful expedient to delay the final triumph of the hero and provides a formidable obstacle for him to overcome.

Aarne and Thompson distinguish two types of tale which turn on the hero's solution of a riddle. In one (MT 851) the hero gains a princess in marriage by this means: in the other (MT 927)

<sup>1</sup> S. C. Roy, *The Bihars* (Ranchi, 1925), pp. 159 f.

<sup>2</sup> S. C. Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs* (Ranchi, 1928), pp. 161 ff.

<sup>3</sup> N. M. Penzer, *The Ocean of Story* (London, 1926), Vol. VI, pp. 74 f.

<sup>4</sup> The riddles of the Queen of Sheba have been extensively discussed in literature. See W. A. Clouston, *Flowers from a Persian Garden* (London, 1890), pp. 218 and 273.

<sup>5</sup> See M. Bloomfield, 'On the Art of Entering Another's Body,' *Proc. Amer. Phil. Soc.* Vol. LVI, pp. 31 ff.

a prisoner saves himself from death by setting a riddle that his judges cannot solve.<sup>1</sup> Mr F. J. Norton has recently studied this second motif in great detail in the pages of *Folk-Lore*.<sup>2</sup>

A Gond story from Mandla comes under the general definition of MT 851, though the heroine is not a princess nor is marriage the result achieved.

A girl longed to sleep with her husband's younger brother. But he was afraid of his brother and refused. At last after she had begged him to come to her for many days, he said, 'I will only come if you bring me the milk of a fly, the pith of a reed, a headless goat, a one-legged quail and let me come to you riding on a horse without eyes.' The girl tried and tried to find these things, but could get nothing. At last she went to a clever Malin who at once solved the riddle. 'The milk of a fly' she said, 'is honey, the pith of a reed is sugarcane, the headless goat is parched barra, the one-legged quail is a brinjal and the horse without eyes is a pair of sandals.' When the girl told her lover the answer to his riddle, he was compelled to yield to her desire and went to her.

In two other stories, we have Indian versions of MT 927; here a clever boy redeems a debt by setting the family credit or a riddle he cannot solve. The first comes from the Pardhans of Mandla.

A Brahmin went to beg at the house of a Gond. Everyone was away in the fields except a little boy. When the Brahmin asked where the family was, the boy replied, 'Mother has gone to turn one into two, and if she has come she won't come. Father has gone to stop the flow of the heavens. Brother has gone to earn abuse from the passers-by. I am examining one and thus know everything.' The Brahmin was unable to understand what the boy meant, and agreed that, if he could explain the riddles, it would show that the Gonds were more learned than the Brahmins. The boy explained that 'My mother has gone to make dal out of gram, and due to the flooded river even if she has come, she won't come. Father has gone to cut grass, brother has gone to make a fence of thorns across a path and thus earn abuse from the travellers. I myself am cooking rice, and by tasting one grain can know whether or no the rest is ready.'

<sup>1</sup> A. Aarne and S. Thompson, *The Types of the Folk-tale* (Helsinki, 1928), pp. 128 and 139.

<sup>2</sup> F. J. Norton, 'Prisoner who Saved his Neck with a Riddle', *Folk-Lore*, Vol. LIII, pp. 27 ff. For a long bibliography of tales containing riddles Penzer refers to V. Chauvin, *Bibliographie des Ouvrages Arabes* (Liege and Leipzig, 1892-1909), Vols. V, p. 193, VI, pp. 42 f and VII, pp. 118 f.

The second story was recorded in a Bison-horn Maria village in Bastar State, and closely resembles the first.

A certain Maria borrowed twenty rupees from a money-lender. When the day came for repayment, the money-lender came to the Maria's house, but found the man himself and his wife and daughter away working in the fields. The Maria's little son, however, was at home ; and when the money-lender asked him where the others were, he replied, ' My father has gone to cover thorns with thorns, my mother has gone to make small things big and my sister has gone to make two out of one.' The money-lender was taken aback at this reply which he could not understand, and begged the boy to explain it to him. The boy refused, and at last the money-lender agreed not only to forgo the debt, but to give the boy a present if he would explain the riddle. The boy then said, ' My father has gone to build a fence of thorns round a garden of thorny brinjals, my mother has gone to a cotton plantation and has picked cotton and is stretching it to take out the seeds, my sister has gone to grind gram into dal.' The money-lender gave the boy twenty rupees as a present and went away.<sup>1</sup>

## II

## RIDDLES ABROAD

There is a charming example of a riddle used as the inspiration of an English love-song in this poem from the seventeenth-century *Wit's Interpreter*, by J. Cotgrave.<sup>2</sup>

Down in a garden sat my dearest Love,  
Her skin more soft and white than down of swan,  
More tender-hearted than the turtle-dove,  
And far more kind than bleeding pelican.  
I courted her ; she rose and blushing said,  
' Why was I born to live and die a maid ? '  
With that I plucked a pretty marigold,  
Whose dewy leaves shut up when day is done :  
' Sweeting,' I said, ' arise, look and behold,  
A pretty riddle I'll to thee unfold :  
These leaves shut in as close as cloistered nun,

<sup>1</sup> For a fuller treatment of the riddle in Indian fiction, see Kalipada Mitra, ' Enigma in Fiction,' *J. B. O. R. S.*, Vol. XII, pp. 83 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in N. Ault, *Seventeenth Century Lyrics* (London, 1928), p. 56.



Yet will they open when they see the sun.'  
 'What mean you by this riddle, sir?' she said,  
 'I pray expound it.' Then I thus began :  
 'Know maids are made for men, man for a maid.'  
 With that she changed her colour and grew wan :  
 'Since that this riddle you so well unfold,  
 Be you the sun, I'll be the marigold.'

Another riddle-poem, by Sir Thomas Wyatt, appears in *Tottel's Miscellany* (1557). The answer is, a Gun.

Vulcan begat me : Minerva me taught :  
 Nature, my mother : Craft nourisht me year by year :  
 Three bodies are my foods : my strength is in naught  
 Anger, wrath, waste and noise are my children dear.  
 Guesse, friend, what I am : and how I am wrought :  
 Monster of sea, or of land, or of else where.  
 Know me, and use me : and I may thee defend :  
 And if I be thine enemy, I may thy life end.

It is surely remarkable that though the riddle appears to be distributed throughout the world, it is—except on the Yukon River and among the Eskimo of Labrador—almost entirely absent in America.<sup>1</sup>

### III

#### THE TECHNIQUE OF MURIA RIDDLES

Among the Murias the riddle does not seem to be used in any ceremonial, but simply as a test of wit. In the ghotul dormitory the posing of riddles is a fairly popular form of amusement. The majority of riddles, however, are not in Gondi, but in Halbi or Chhattisgarhi which may indicate that the riddle is not an original Muria form but has arisen as a result of the tribe's contact with the outer world.

<sup>1</sup> F. Boas, 'Notes and Queries' in *J. Amer. Folk-Lore*, Vol. XXXIX, p. 486 and F. Boas, *General Anthropology* (New York, 1938), p. 598.

In Gondi, the riddles are usually in what may be called prose. Rhyme is very uncommon and even assonance and punning rare. The following are hardly typical—

Utu tutu bhui la tutu.  
The horn comes out of the ground.

*A bamboo shoot.*

Uding uding inta, day day inta.  
Say sit sit and say go go.

*Sand in which you get stuck.*

Porro kare, adi mend.  
Threshing-floor above, its pole below.

*An umbrella.*

Konda udinta kasra witinta.  
The bullock sits, the tethering cord runs away.

*A pumpkin.*

The usual Gondi riddle has no special form—  
Undi urpadun nur nei kaskintang.  
A hundred dogs bite one lizard.

*The rafter of a house.*

Tamur irwura lohku jotay manta, mati warro warrona  
lote horiyor.

The brothers live together, but never enter  
each other's house.

*A pair of shoes.*

It is in the Halbi riddles, which are now almost as common as those in the original Gondi, that we find rhyme and assonance. The Halbi riddle is spoken very fast with an emphasis on a central word.

Suklo rukh thai kare ;  
Burga bhalu hai kare.  
The dry tree say thai ;  
The old bear says hai.

*A gun.*

Kurlu dongri marlu jhati ;  
Ek thuni pachas pati.  
Cut shrubs on the hill of kurlu trees ;  
There are fifty rafters on one pole.

*An umbrella.*

Ek garhcho morkigai,  
Bara garhcho panikhai.

The cow with the broken horn from one city  
drinks the water of twelve cities.

*A fishing hook.*

Chiringta baja ;  
Natral paga.

It makes a noise like a drum ;  
It has a red turban.

*Saras crane.*

Alliteration is also used.

Phulte phulese,  
Jharte jharese.

Flower blossoms  
and drops soon.

*Bazaar.*

Some riddles end with a taunt or challenge, a device which is generally only used when an extra line is needed to complete the rhyme.

Jhil mili tarai  
Rai ratan bari  
Ye dhandha ke nijanbe  
Bayle cho nak ke kati.

The tank sparkles  
The fence is beautiful  
If you don't answer this riddle,  
Your wife's nose will be cut off.

*A mirror.*

Karkas pana rupas dheti  
Dhandha ko nahi ghasnin ke beti.

Rough leaves, silver branches  
If you don't know this riddle,  
You're a Ghasnin's daughter.

*Sugar cane.*

There's a wall round the lake.  
If you can't answer this, you'll be my kabari.

*A mirror.*

The stick is straight,  
At the top are bells.  
If you don't know this  
An ant will bite your bottom.

*Male genitalia.*

A few rather curious riddles take the form of imaginary conversations. A thorn addresses a man about to step on it. 'I see you, but you don't see me.' A house-holder speaks to a leaf blown in by the wind. 'Where have you come from, old chap, making your camp on my doorstep?' A flooded river as it rushes speaks to the reeds growing in its bed, 'You stay where you are; I am going to Ratanpur.'<sup>1</sup>

VERRIER ELWIN

IV

ENGLISH RIDDLES

Mr Frederick Tupper in an introduction to *The Exeter Book of Riddles* distinguishes two kinds of English riddle—the 'art riddle' of which *The Exeter Book* contains eighty-nine examples and the 'folk-riddle' which survived until the eighteenth century as part of English peasant traditions. The 'art riddle' was characteristic of Anglo-Saxon poetry and was usually an amplification of details. A subject was taken, analysed into its different parts and a poem built up from them.

White of throat I am  
 Fallow gray my head  
 Fallow are my flanks  
 And my feet are swift  
 Battle-weapons bear I  
 Bristles on my back  
 Like a sow's stand up.  
 From my cheeks two ears  
 Over mine eyes prick up.  
 With my pointed toes  
 Through the green grass step I  
 Great is then the grief  
 Fated to me if a fighter  
 Fierce as death in battle  
 Findeth me concealed  
 Where I keep the house  
 With my bairns, the building  
 When he comes that deadly guest  
 (Digging) to my doors  
 Death is doomed to them.  
 So full stoutly must I  
 With my foreclaws working  
 Through the mountain steep

<sup>1</sup> In the Baiga version, a man says to his footprint, 'You stay behind: I am going away.'

Make myself a street  
 By a hidden way  
 Through the hole of the hillside  
 Lead my precious ones, my children  
 Then I shall no more  
 Fear in any wise  
 War with the Death-whelp.  
 If the greedy battle-scather  
 In the straightened way  
 Seeks me on my gang-slot  
 Then he shall not miss  
 War-mote on the (mark)-path  
 Where the fighters meet.  
 When I rise at last,  
 Through the roofing of the hills,  
 And I furiously deal strokes  
 With my darts of war  
 On the loathly foes  
 Whom I long had fled.

A Badger.<sup>1</sup>

The English folk-riddle, on the other hand, is identical with the folk-riddles of India and Africa.

## I

Nanny goat hanny goat in a white petticoat.  
 The longer she stands the shorter she grows.

A candle.

## II

Little Annie Etticoat  
 In a white petticoat  
 And a red nose,  
 The longer she stands  
 The shorter she grows.

A candle.

## III

My ribs are lined with leather  
 I've a hole in my side  
 And I'm often used.

Bellows.

## IV

Mother, father, sister, brother  
 All running after one another  
 And can't catch one another.

Sails of a wind-mill.

<sup>1</sup> A. Stopford Brooke, *The History of Early English Literature*, Vol. I. p. 198.

## V

As round as an apple  
As deep as a cup  
And all the King's horses  
Can't pull it up.

A well.

## VI

What shoe-maker makes shoes without leather,  
With all the four elements put together,  
Fire and water, earth and air?  
Every customer has two pair.

Horse shoe.

## VII

A little wood, a little wire  
A little house without a fire.

A mouse trap.

## VIII

As I went up a narrow lane  
I met a band of soldiers  
With their rickets and their rockets,  
And their little yellow jackets,  
And they all said buzz, buzz.

A swarm of bees.

## IX

Long legs  
Crooked thighs  
Little head  
And no eyes.

Pair of tongs.

## X

Come a riddle, come a riddle  
Come a rot, tot, tot  
A little wee man in a red red coat,  
A stick in his hand and a stone in his throat,  
Come a riddle, come a riddle  
Come a rot, tot, tot.

A cherry.

## XI

Old mother Twitchet had but one eye  
And a long tail which she let fly;  
And every time she went over a gap,  
She left a bit of her tail in a trap.

A needle and thread.

## XII

Four and twenty white beasts  
And the red one licks them all.

The teeth and the  
tongue.

## XIII

Thirty white horses  
 Upon a red hill  
 Now they chatter  
 Now they clatter  
 Now they stand still.

Teeth and gums.

## XIV

Up hill spare me  
 Down hill 'ware me  
 On level ground spare me not  
 And in the stable forget me not.

A horse.

## XV

As I were going over London Brig  
 I peeped into a winder  
 And I saw four and twenty ladies  
 Dancing on a cinder.

Sparks.

## XVI

As I were going over London Brig  
 I met a load of hay  
 I shot with my pistol  
 And all flew away.

A bird.

## XVII

As I was going over London Brig  
 I spies a little red thing  
 I picks it up I sucks it blood  
 And leaves it skin to dry.

An orange.

## XVIII

Black within and black without  
 Four corners round about.

An oven.

## XIX

Black within and red without  
 Four corners round about.

A chimney.

## XX

Black within and black without  
 Three legs and an iron cap.

A porridge pot.

## XXI

Brass cap and wooden head  
 Spits fire and spews lead.

A gun.

## XXII

As I was going over Humber  
I heard a great rumble  
Three pots a boiling  
And no fire under,

Water under a boat.

## XXIII

Round the house and round the house  
And in my lady's chamber.

The sun.

## XXIV

Round the house and round the house  
And a black glove in the window.

Rain.

## XXV

As black as ink and isn't ink  
As white as milk and isn't milk  
As soft as silk and isn't silk  
And hops like a filly-foal  
What's that, Miss?

A magpie.

## XXVI

Flower of England, fruit of Spain  
Met together in a shower of rain  
Put in a cloth and tied with a string  
If you tell me this riddle, I'll give you  
a ring.

Plum pudding.

## XXVII

As white as milk  
As soft as silk  
As bitter as gall  
And a hard wall  
Surrounds me all.

An egg.

## XXVIII

At the end of my yard there is a vat  
Four-and-twenty ladies dancing in that  
Some in green gowns and some in blue hat  
He is a wise man who can tell me that. Flax.

## XXIX

Purple, yellow, red and green  
The King cannot reach it, nor the Queen  
Nor can old Noll, whose power's so great  
Tell me this riddle while I count eight. Rainbow.



## XXX

As I went through the garden gap  
 Who should I meet but Dick Red-cap  
 A stick in his hand, a stone in his throat  
 If you tell me this riddle, I will give you a  
 groat. Cherry.<sup>1</sup>

In these riddles, the selection of domestic and agrarian themes is the same as in India. The method of construction is similar. There is the same starting point in a visual sensibility. Like Indian riddles, they are 'the seeds of poetry'.

## VI

## AFRICAN RIDDLES

Tylor in *Primitive Culture* gives a few instances of African riddles and there is a fairly large collection in A. C. Hollis's *The Nandi*. I give below a few examples from these sources.

## (1) ZULU

## I

The men who form a row and dance the  
 wedding dance, adorned in white hip-  
 dresses. The teeth.

## II

The man who lies down until sunset,  
 works all night and is never seen when  
 he works. The closing-poles of  
 the cattle pen.

## III

The man whose laughter is not liked. Fire.

## (2) BASUTO

## IV

It throws itself from the mountain with-  
 out being broken. A waterfall.

## V

The thing that travels quickly without  
 legs or wings and no cliff, river or wall  
 can stop it. The voice.

<sup>1</sup> From *Notes and Queries*, third series, Vol. 8 (1865) and *Mother Goose's Book of Nursery Rhymes and Songs* (London, 1910).

## VI

The ten trees with the ten flat stones on  
top of them.

The fingers.

## VII

The little immovable dumb boy who is  
dressed warm by day and left naked at  
night.

The clothes' peg.

## (3) SWAHILI

## VIII

A hen that lays among thorns.

A pineapple.

## (4) YORUBA

## IX

The long and slender trading woman who  
never gets to market.

A canoe (it stops  
at the landing  
place).

## (5) NANDI

## X

The girl who eats every morning and goes  
to bed hungry.

A broom.

## XI

The friend who runs where I go.

The belly.

## XII

The woman who lives by the river with  
many garments.

The wild banana.

## XIII

The black woman who lives by the river.

Obsidian.

## XIV

The mother with froth at her mouth.

A pot of porridge  
bubbling over the  
fire.

## XV

The woman who carried a man's head.

A pumpkin.

## XVI

The father with the fur cloak

A caterpillar.

## XVII

Women's walking sticks in an empty house. Blades of grass.

## XVIII

The hut with the thorn enclosure.                      Eye and eyebrow.

## XIX

The bell of a warrior in a hiding place.              A mole.

## XX

The long-legged men who drove me home.      Rain.

## VII

## TRIBAL RIDDLES

The importance of riddles for defining tribal differences will be seen when the riddles of one tribe are compared with another's. Almost all the tribes of Chota Nagpur and Central India have a similar landscape. Many of them have common implements. Their material environments are much the same. Yet out of a tribe's four hundred riddles, scarcely forty are shared. Almost all Uraon riddles differ markedly from Munda. Almost all Kharia riddles differ radically from Santal. Almost all Baiga riddles are quite distinct from Muria. Instead of each area possessing a common stock, it is as if a tribe keeps rigidly to itself. Besides a ban on inter-tribal marriages, it is as if there were a ban on inter-tribal riddles. Only fundamental differences in sensibility—differences which show with equal clarity in the poetry—can explain this great variety.

I give below four common themes which illustrate these differences.

## (1) DRUM

Hollow inside	
Bewels outside.	Uraon
The silent one that weeps when beaten.	Uraon
It cries in the lap	
And is silent on the ground.	Uraon
A brown cow lows in the middle of a field.	Uraon
The hanged and buried enemy is coming.	Uraon
The boy who only speaks when beaten.	Uraon
Tiny fishes gather when the dry tree is beaten.	Uraon
Outside pretty	
Inside empty.	Uraon
Put down silent	
Picked up noisy.	Uraon

A red ox lows in a lonely jungle.	Kharia
A tiger with no bowels roars in the jungle.	Kharia
The wood is different	
The bark is different	
And over them dances the old monkey.	Kharia
A dead bullock is lowing.	Munda
One who was killed	
One who was flayed	
One who was buried	
Is calling.	Munda
Above the sound of <i>jhhan jhhan</i>	Munda
Inside the sound of <i>bhang bhang</i> .	
Little sisters come when a dry trunk is beaten.	Munda
At the least touch it growls.	Baiga
He is brought and hung up. When the crowd gathers, they beat him.	Baiga
The fig which the two king-crows can never finish eating.	Santal
Touch a man's goat and it weeps.	Santal
When the dead ox lows, the goat cries and draws near.	Santal
A black ox lows, a black cow moos and the fence begins to shake.	Santal

## (2) GRINDSTONE

The woman who passes a powdered stool.	Uraon
The old woman who eases herself as she eats.	Uraon
The cow with one horn that feeds on its master's food.	Uraon
An old woman who eases herself as she eats.	Kharia
The woman who is always on the move and is always easing herself.	Kharia
The woman who vomits ashes.	Kharia
The man who only vomits flour.	Munda
The man who turns round when his top-knot is pulled.	Munda

The man who eats <i>marua</i> and passes a white stool.	Munda
The old woman who eases herself at the back of the houses.	Munda
The man who when caught by his head goes round and round.	Munda
From an old woman there falls a pile of ashes.	Gond
It eats, it runs, it vomits all at once.	Gond
Mother lies still : father moves about on top of her.	Baiga
Catch hold of its tail—and it growls.	Baiga
The man sleeps. It is the girl who shakes him.	Baiga
With its mouth it eats and with its stomach it chews.	Santal

## (3) RICE POUNDER

A wooden horse with a heron's beak.	Uraon
The black bitch that jumps when kicked on the hill.	Uraon
The elephant pounds it	
The horse levels it.	Uraon
Which is the best of the drums ?	Uraon
Kick it and it jumps.	Uraon
<i>Thuruk thuruk</i> it sounds	
In a corner it hides.	Uraon
The man who roars when kicked.	Munda
Beat it jumping up and down	
Keep an eye upon the hole.	Baiga
The man who when they kick his bottom vomits rice.	Santal
The hobby horse from the jungle on whom the women soldiers canter.	Santal
It farts when you kick its buttocks.	Santal
The man who goes on eating no matter how you kick him.	Santal

## (4) CHULHA (a country hearth)

The old woman with a mouthful of tooth-brushes.	Uraon
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The girl with three breasts	Kharia.
The man with three legs	Munda.
The woman with three breasts.	Munda.
The three women with a single pot	Munda.
From an old woman, when she washes in the morning there comes a lot of dirt.	Gond.
Everyone will run away But the bent old woman will not flee.	Santal.
The girl with three breasts	Santal.
The elephant with six hip bones.	Santal.
The old woman who says she will straighten all the bent wood.	Santal.

## VIII

## SANTAL RIDDLE TALK

Among Uraons, Kharias and Mundas, the riddle is a form of village amusement, a midget poem which makes children laugh in the evenings and amuses old men when they sit round drinking at weddings. With Santals, on the other hand, its range is very much wider. The riddle is not merely a form of children's wit or a way of entertaining visitors. Behind the formal riddles or *kudum* are other riddles—turns of everyday phrase and conventions of conversation. The riddle is part of a whole way of Santal talk.

A type of phrase which covers some of these informal riddles is the euphemism. When a Santal sees an old man's teeth are going, he does not refer directly to the teeth but says 'the white pebbles are falling' or 'the grinding stones are wanting.' When he gets up in the dark hours of the morning, he does not say that he is going to urinate. He simply says that 'he is going to the courtyard' or 'to open the outlet of a tank' and if he goes to defecate he says 'he is going to pay a creditor', 'to meet a marriage party' or 'pay his rent.' Santal women noticing that a girl is pregnant often avoid any direct allusion but use phrases such as 'her body is in bud' 'she is sitting heavy at home,' 'her body has altered,' 'she is carrying a bundle,' 'she is going with a full body.' Or, again when some one dies, Santals do not mention death but say, 'he has gone down to the ground,' 'he has gone to herd the alligators,' 'he has got tired', 'he has fled away,' 'he has gone across.' In this way, the talk is given a tinge of gentleness and the riddles neutralise the feelings.

The euphemism, however, is only a small part of Santal riddle-talk. Many phrases are humorous and are used so as to give to conversation a twist of fun. At a wedding or a feast, for example, guests are 'tethered' or 'tied with a new rope' when their legs are washed or they are given rice beer. Those who are getting tired of waiting say that 'the flour ants are eating them,' while hosts who are conscious that a meal is late offer mock apologies and say 'we are spreading our friends out to dry.' A boy who is particularly hungry complains that 'a standing fever is on him' or that 'his middle boy has still not got a wife.' Visitors who have cleaned their teeth and are hoping for some stale food or some dregs of rice say to their host, 'We have swept the courtyard, give us the old things, show us the dead and drowned.' Distributing leaf cups is 'sending round the boats,' cooking maize is 'a leopard growling' while waiting for a second course is 'getting the threshing floor ready.' When the meal is over and the guests get up 'they straighten the ends of their spines' and 'convert their bodies from baskets on the ground to palmyra palms.' If they have fed well they say 'they have covered their kettle-drums' and 'loaded the carts' but if they have been given only a little parched rice they complain of getting only 'a few ants' drums.' During 'the hunger period' of the year, when Santals often dilute their rice with water, they say 'they are looking at the stars.' Finally at the end of all meals when the women are cleaning the utensils, they 'make the big and little axes shine.'

A similar set of riddle phrases cover sexual intercourse, marriage and child birth. Many of these phrases are poetic while some of them are jokes.

Intercourse, for instance, is referred to in words such as 'she put a flower bud in her hair,' 'they laughed and joked together,' 'they went off to eat figs' (elopement), 'the girls are spreading out their tail feathers' (preparing for intercourse), 'she swept the courtyard of her uncle,' 'he put his arm round her and took her to drink water,' 'the boy is always stealing skin,' 'the girl has been smelt,' 'father and son husk in the same mortar' (incest), 'he was always like it, grazing on fresh grass.'

Almost all the phases of a marriage have their riddles. Santal parents seeking a marriage broker say 'We must get an *uric* bird to talk it over with them,' or 'We must send a *piyo* bird' (a golden oriole). When they are arranging a marriage, they 'look for good omens' or 'go to see a pot' and when the marriage is settled, they announce that 'they have shut up this girl' and 'the girl is tied to this boy.' Fixing the wedding date is 'sending the knot' while the prevention of a marriage is 'stopping the water-way.' A goat killed for a wedding feast is 'the mountain veget-

able,' a pig is 'an elephant' and women at a wedding are 'the beardless rajas.' If a party is seeking a bridegroom, they are asked if they 'have brought mustard or an oil seed' (the oil seed or sesame is the girl). When the marriage is over and the girl has gone to a wealthy house, Santals say 'the girl has perched on a thick branch,' 'she has found a shelter under a big tree,' 'she has got a creeper's pole to support her' and after an ordinary wedding, the usual remark is that 'the calf has been tied.' Occasionally a boy puts sindur on a girl by force and this is known as 'scratching by a leopard.' At times, also, a family wants a widow or a divorced girl as a bride and they then say 'we want a vessel with a fissured bottom.'

There is a similar set of phrases for child-birth. When a woman is about to have a child, Santals remark that 'she has gone to watch a corner of the house,' 'her sitting days have come,' 'she has collected a bundle of seeds.' When labour pains start, 'her water is hot' and women helping at a delivery may say about the child 'it is reaching the socket but has not yet passed the door.' When the child has been safely born, the usual phrases are 'she has had a flower-bud fall,' 'she has come down from the dry tree,' 'a new guest has come,' or 'the paddy bale has burst'. It is not quite proper to ask bluntly if the child is a boy or a girl and a common form of enquiry is to ask if it is 'one that carries on the shoulder,' 'one that carries on the head' or 'one that picks or cooks vegetables.'

Other phrases are—

- 'Both boy and girl are mature. In a year's time they will throw down leaf-cups' (the name-giving ritual after child birth).
- 'She has given up her dancing' (suckling the child).
- 'Today we are bringing down the young parrot' (the name-giving ritual)
- 'The girl has become empty' (an unmarried mother).
- 'She is making vegetables' (not to get children).

## II

Another type of riddle-talk is the kenning. Herbert Read in *English Prose Style* notes that kennings 'differ from metaphors in that they have a deceptive intention and may indeed have their origin in some form of taboo. Primitive man associated the thing and its name in an intimate fashion and when the thing was an object of veneration or fear, he would seek for some form of periphrasis, so as to avoid a direct reference. A kenning is a simple periphrasis of this kind.'<sup>1</sup> As early as Anglo-Saxon literature, however, kennings were not confined to objects of fear and two distinct forms are evident. One is the kenning proper in which the subject is a matter for dread and therefore for avoid-

1. Herbert Read, *English Prose Style* (London, 1931), pp. 31-2.



ance. The other is a 'false' kenning in which the method of the first is used not for avoidance but for poetry or wit. An English example of the true kenning is the practice on Holy Island in Northumberland of always referring to pigs as 'the things,' pigs being regarded as in some way inimical to sailors. An Anglo-Saxon example of the poetic kenning is the following poem where there is no danger but 'sea garment' is a kenning for a sail and 'sea-timber,' 'wave floater,' 'sea goer' and 'twisted prow' are kennings for a ship.

There on the mast  
Was a sea-garment  
A sail made fast by rope  
The sea-timber cracked  
Not there did the wind  
Across the billows  
Hinder the wave-floater's way  
The sea-goer sped  
Scudded foamy-necked  
Across the ocean  
The twisted prow  
Over the sea-streams.<sup>1</sup>

In Santal talk, kennings of both kinds are important. True kennings are used when Santals are in the jungle and think that a big animal is near. Instead of referring to a 'tiger' or a 'leopard' they then use terms such as 'the wild cat,' 'the one with the big mouth,' 'the hornless bullock,' 'the one with the short nose,' 'the red ox.' Or again when going through a forest with wild elephants, the term 'elephant' is carefully avoided and the phrase 'the big girl' is used instead and if bears are known to be about they do not say 'bears' but talk of 'hairy caterpillars.' Similarly when a man is bitten by a snake, Santals do not name the snake but say that 'a fibre,' 'a twig' or 'the long man' has touched him. Again, when a man is ill and it is thought that the bongas are at fault, Santals do not mention the bongas or the ancestors but say 'the hidden friends are hungry.' In this way, the riddle neutralises a danger.

Even more widely used, however, is the false kenning. In this form, a mother, for example, becomes 'the milk tree.' A raw girl is 'the unopened flower.' Water is 'the frog's platform.' A goat is 'the leaf-tearer.' A stone is 'the soap of centuries,' a thunderbolt is 'sky fire,' while an enemy is 'a thorn in the eye.' Rice water is 'black cow's milk' and a pot of rice-beer is 'the black girl.' A small man is called 'the field mouse.' Hands and legs are 'leaves and branches' while a full-grown girl is 'a clucking hen.' A woman with shock-headed hair is 'an owl.' A stay-

<sup>1</sup> B. S. Phillpos, *Edda and Saga* (London, 1931), p. 27.

at-home is 'a well frog.' Women talking are 'the noise of drums.' Death by witchcraft is 'the petticoat's reaping' while a loose woman is a 'wandering heifer.' A pig is 'the earth rooter', a cock 'the fence owl' and a child's belly is 'the little kettle-drum.' The Sohrae festival is sometimes 'the elder sister' and sometimes 'the festival like an elephant.' Maize cobs are 'bats hanging in the house' and by a vivid stroke of fancy, prison is 'the red house,' a magistrate is 'a cat' and a court 'the cat's door.' Clothes are 'feathers', milk is 'white water,' a stick 'a faithful companion.' A drum is sometimes 'a gay girl' and sometimes 'a tortoise egg.' An angry man has eyes 'red with blood.' Tears are 'eye water' and cloth 'a fence.' The manjhi or head-man is 'the village pillar.' A Hindu is 'a cat.' A lazy girl who only gossips is 'a swimmer.' A jealous lover is 'a man with burning eyes'. Rice beer is 'furrow water' and magic is 'a fiery arrow.'

Such kennings range over the commoner elements in village life but there are many others which also deal with sexual and marital matters. The cunnus, for example, is

The old house site  
 The buried bonga  
 The little cockroach  
 The small bear  
 The husking mortar  
 The scorpion hole  
 The flesh of a mussel  
 The hollow where men fall.

The penis is

The bent pestle  
 The mallet of *bar* wood  
 The bunch of *lopon* fruits  
 The goat's tail.

The approach of pubic hair is 'the uric birds nesting.' Semen is 'marriage water' while the testicles are 'the two eggs' and 'the pumpkin of the underworld.' Menstruation is 'a blossom' and 'a welling spring' and if a woman's breasts are showing, 'her vegetables are burning.'

Many further kennings deal with husbands, wives and children.

A husband is

The umbrella shadow  
 The one who stirs the curry  
 The woman's bridle  
 The jaher tree.

A wife is

The old house site  
The spirit of the house  
The ruling spirit  
The basket-spirit  
The load  
The yoke.

Children are

The ears of paddy  
The paddy seedlings  
The young calves  
The whimpering ones  
The young parrots  
The fruit of the tree  
The yolks of eggs  
The little pumpkin fiddles.<sup>1</sup>

Through the genial humour of this riddle-talk, Santals convey a whole attitude to life.

#### IX

#### ANALOGIES

##### (1) *The Arabian Nights*

Riddle-talk in the sense of a whole habit of speech has very few examples but there are two analogies which are worth noting. The first is a passage from the Arabian Nights (*The Book of the One Thousand Nights and One Night*. Translated by E. Powys Mathers. Vol. 7 pp. 107-III).

'I locked the door of my shop and followed my sweet mistress and her slaves, until we came to a certain palace, whose doors opened to let us pass. The girl gave a command to two eunuchs, who led me forth to the hammam where they bathed me, perfumed me with Chinese amber, and clothed me in sumptuous garments of my love's providing. Then they led me through many corridors to a hidden apartment, where the lily of my desire and perfect love lay careless upon a deep brocaded bed.

When we were alone together, she said: "Come here, come close, O sounding brass! As Allah lives, you must have been a little booby in the old days, to refuse such a night as this! But I will not confuse you by recalling the past." Seeing her before me, I felt the wasted days clamour within me, and made as if to leap. But she stopped me with a gesture and a smile, saying: "Before the fight, O soldier, let me hear if you know the name of your antagonist." "River of grace," said I. "No," said she. "White father," said I. "No," said she. "Sweet fleshy," said I. "No," said she. "Peeled sesame," said I. "No," said she.

<sup>1</sup> For many phrases in this note I am indebted to P.O. Bodding, *A Santal Dictionary* (Oslo, 1932-1936), Vol. I-V, and to Mr Solomon Murmu and Mr G. G. Soren.

"Basil of the bridge," said I. "No," said she. "Wild mule," said I. "No," said she. "I only know one more name," said I, "Father Mansur's Khan." "You are wrong," said she, "Come, tell me, sounding brass, did all your masters teach you nothing?" "Nothing," said I. Then said she: "Listen to the thing's rightful names. They are: dumb starling, fat sheep, silent tongue, wordless eloquence, adjustable vice, sliding rule, mad biter, great shaker, magnetic gulf, Jacob's well, little cradle, nest without eggs, bird without feathers, dove without stain, cat without whiskers, silent chicken, and rabbit without ears."

As soon as she saw that I had gathered the theory of these things, she grasped me hard between her thighs and arms, saying: "In Allah's name, in Allah's name, dear sounding brass, be swift in the assault, be heavy in your fall, throw light, swim deep, cork close, and jump and jump again. Hateful are the once risers, the twice risers, and those who rise to fall! Come, stiffly stand to it, dear friend!" "But there should be seemly order in all things," I objected, "Where shall I begin?" "Where you like sounding brass," she panted. "Then first I will give seed to the dumb starling," said I. "He is ready, oh, he is ready," cried my love.

Then, O King of time, I said to the child of my inheritance: "Feed the starling!" So he bountifully fed the starling with great handfuls, until the dumb starling signified after its kind: "Allah increase you! Allah increase you!"

And I said to the child: "Bow to the sweet fat sheep!" He bowed so low and bowed so deep to the sweet fat sheep, that the sheep answered after its kind: "Allah increase you! Allah increase you!"

And I said to the child: "Now speak to the silent tongue!" He rubbed the silent tongue with a finger so strong and young, that the silent tongue found voice and by it was sung: "Allah increase you! Allah increase you!"

And I said to the child: "Now tame the savage biter's bite!" The child caressed the savage wight, gripping so tight that he came forth unscathed in the thing's despite, and the mouth cried: "A right drink, a right, a drink of delight."

And I said to the child: "Now fill up Jacob's well, O strongest man in Israel!" He filled that well so well that none might tell that there had been a well.

And I said to the child: "Now heat the bird without feathers!" And the child outran all tethers till the bird cried: "Now I am warm for all weathers."

And I said to the child: "Now give corn to the dumb chick!" And he spread the corn so thick and so quick that the chick cried: the chick cried: "O benediction, O benediction, dic dic!"

And I said to the child : " Do not forget the rabbit without an ear. It has fallen fast asleep, I fear ! " And the child drew near and woke the rabbit and calmed its fear, with counsels queer and dear. The rabbit cried : " I hear ! "

And in this way, O king of time, I urged the child to converse with every aspect of his adversary, to say the correct thing and to draw the full savour from each answer. His reply to the cat without a whisker could not have been brisker, and nothing could have been more plain than his discourse with the dove which had no stain. Calling a spade a spade'll give you an idea of his chat with the cradle ; and he was at his best with the eggless nest. He adapted himself and was not over virtuous or nice with the adaptable vice ; he did not slip like a fool with the sliding rule ; also, he showed himself steel filings to the magnetic gulf's beguilings, till the sweet possessor of all these things cried out : " I choke, I choke ! It is no joke, this mighty artichoke ! "

But as soon as morning light appeared we said our prayer and went together to the bath. When we came out of the hammam and sat down to eat together, my love said to me : " Sounding brass, you have proved yourself a champion, and I am content that I chose you out and waited for you. Would you like to be married to me, or would you like to leave me ? " " Rather the red death than to leave your white face, my mistress," I cried, and she exclaimed : " If you think so, we need the kadi."

The kadi and witnesses were sent for ; and after they had written out our marriage contract, we ate and waited for digestion. As soon as our stomachs were calmed, we sprang again to the assault and made the night a fellow labourer with the day.

Life and love lived love and life together for thirty days and nights, my lord. I crushed and filed and stuffed the stuffable, the fileable, the crushable, until a giddiness came over me and I dared to say, " I know not why, my saint, but I feel I cannot plant the twelfth great lance today." " But the twelfth is the most necessary," my love objected, " The eleven do not count. Yet it is impossible, impossible," said I. Then said she with a laugh : with a laugh : " You must have rest, my poor, you must have rest ! " And when I heard that word, I lay down and fainted clear away.

## X

### ANALOGIES

#### (2) *Rhyming slang*

A second analogy to Santal riddle-talk is the rhyming slang of Cockneys. Unlike Santal riddles, this is not based on visual parallels but on the rhyming sounds of words. In its working,

however, it is very similar, for the actual object is always kept submerged while a new and strange image appears as a double.

Mr Alan Dent in a recent article gives the following examples <sup>1</sup>:

Beer	A pig's ear
Mouth	North and South
Feet	Plate of meat
Wages	Rock of Ages.
Fish	Lillian Gish.
Rum	Tom thumb
Dark	Noah's Ark
Cold	Potatoes in the mould
Bed	Uncle Ned
Shave	Ocean wave
Eyes	Mince pies
Stairs	Apples and pears
Fire	Jeremiah
Wife	Trouble and strife
Head	Loaf of bread

as in the following—

'Eh, but doesn't the Uncle Ned pull! well, I, as my ocean-wave an' when I've got my mince-pies properly open I goes down the apples and pears and lights the Jeremiah for my trouble and strife.'

A smoke	A laugh and a joke
Time	Bird-lime
Nose	I suppose
Clothes line	The grape-vine

as in—

'Then I have my break-fast and a laugh an' a joke if I've any bird-lime. The other day I was so late I ran out of the house blowing my I suppose and nearly got hung on the grapevine.'

Hill	Jack and Jill
Water	The farmer's daughter
Tea	Rosie Lee

'I 'as to stagger up the Jack and Jill with the farmer's daughter for the boss when he wants his Rosie Lee.'

Jacket	Steam-packet
Trowel	Baden Powell
Old girl	The old ivory pearl
Kidding	Tea pot-lidding

'Yesterday I tore my steam-packet with a Baden-Powell. The old ivory pearl hasn't seen it yet, but when she does, I'll get it in the mince-pie, an' I'm not tea-pot lidding.'

W. G. ARCHER

<sup>1</sup> *The Strand Magazine* (London, 1943).

# THE RIDDLES OF DEATH

BY DURGA BHAGWAT

ABORIGINAL poetry reveals marvellously the working of the simple and intuitive mind. The zest for life and a ready response to sexual love give it a special charm and colour. Sufferings there are; yet they are not powerful enough to stifle the freshness of the songs. The songs are subjective; yet we rarely come across tragic or philosophic moods in them. Riddles, on the other hand, represent the objective and intellectual side of the primitive mind. A riddle presupposes a command of language, a mastery of thought and a powerful sense of rhythm. A single idea is worked out allegorically, in the form of a question, which baffles the listener and it is only because riddles are part of the traditional heritage of the people that answers to them are possible.

Riddles being an outcome of an objective frame of mind, they afford a good deal of scope for humour. You can make fun of anything and every thing in a suitable way. You do not, of course, offend, but you can provoke laughter by hurling a joke here and a joke there. No object is formidable. Even remote, unapproachable things can be made to feel within the reach and even familiar. So the shoe and the walking stick, the stove and the frying pan, huts and fields, birds, flowers and animals, rivers and lakes, hills and forests, the sky, the moon and the stars, in short every thing under the sun, and even the sun itself becomes the subject of riddles. It is not only tangible things but abstract ideas of life and death that serve as themes for riddles.

Riddles are chiefly recreative, but among the Gonds there is one type—the riddle of death—which has a ritualistic value. These riddles form a part of the obituary services. Their form is different from other riddles. They are like songs long and monotonous. They are the *Karsal git*, the songs sung on the death of a male married member of the community. They are sung at the final death ceremony within three years of the death by men only. No woman or child is allowed to listen to them. In order to recite them men retire to the farthest corner of the village at night. They take a big flat round drum with them and no other musical instrument. The drum is kept in the middle near the fire and a man beats it hard. The men divide themselves into two rows and squat on the ground facing one another. Then the riddle competition starts. One party sings a riddle and the opposite party tries to answer it back. The song continues till the proper solution is suggested by the opponents. Then the other party takes up another riddle-song. The solution to all these riddle-songs is only one. It is Life.

The mystery of Death baffles the aboriginal as much as it would any one else; yet bereavement, the sense of indomitable

destiny does not chill the spirit. For the first time the Gond is seen thinking deeply and dubiously about Life and Death. No emotion of sorrow moves him. His attitude is sympathetic, even kind. He does not forget the dead. He has great respect, even awe, for them. He looks on the event of death in the poetic way of an optimistic philosopher. 'What is death?' he asks himself. 'Death is nothing but life in transformation' is the answer that comes to him. The conviction comes quickly and he is happy again. He goes home and pays homage to the departed, so that they may trouble him in no way and may be born again soon in his family. The riddle songs are in Gondi, and they are on the verge of extinction. In the Hindi speaking regions, they exist no more. It is only in some parts of Bastar and in the southern portion of Drug and Raipur districts that they are known.

In the following riddle, Life is compared to a shy virgin girl, who is shut away by her relatives from youthful male intimacy. Yet she rebels, she struggles, she comes out of the prison and enjoys all that youth and love have to offer. Her personal charm, and aspiration add to her youth and love. Motiari is also the young moth in the cocoon stage. The fetters of death are like the seven layers of the cocoon walls. The creature within seems to be life-less. But one day the glorious moth comes out. The cocoon is thrown away, forgotten like a corpse. But Life in it is liberated and it soars high. Motiari is also the sprout of the bamboo. It has to struggle hard to come out of its hard seven-fold covering. When it comes out at last, it does not care to look at its tattered covering but soon identifies its interest with its tall and vigorous neighbourhood.

## I

I shall tell a story  
 As you want a story  
 'I shall hear a story' you say  
 O my own younger brother  
 Listen to it  
 O my younger brother  
 If you want to hear  
 Lend me your ear  
 Oh my own younger brother  
 It is a tiny story  
 Tell me the name of the young virgin  
 The name of young Motiari  
 O my young brother  
 She is called Motiari, the moth  
 Seven-fold is her garment



She tears it and goes up  
 So strong is she  
 Tell me her name  
 She is not to be touched  
 She is without shape  
 Find out her name  
 She does not live in the upper world  
 On the earth she lives  
 You do not know her  
 O my younger brother  
 I shall have no brother  
 We are people of the same village  
 O younger brother  
 There is no cause for quarrel  
 We shall play in great harmony  
 What you say is quite true  
 O my younger brother.

## II

What you say is quite true  
 O elder brother  
 It is nice that you say it  
 O elder brother  
 A young virgin  
 A young virgin there is  
 You say, o elder brother  
 Motiari, the young virgin is not small  
 Motiari is big  
 Her name is famous  
 Her name is Jiv, Life  
 O big brother  
 There are young virgins of many types  
 There are several young virgins  
 The young virgin is a bird  
 Is she, O big brother ?  
 How can I know her  
 If she stays beyond  
 O big brother  
 I do not know what is above  
 O big brother  
 What is underneath I do not know  
 O big brother  
 I do not understand time also  
 O big brother  
 You will have to tell it  
 O big brother  
 She goes out through the seven layers

What can she be  
 O big brother  
 I do not know it  
 O big brother  
 I do not know it  
 O big brother  
 I do not know it  
 O big brother  
 You will have to tell the name.

## III

In the following riddle, life is compared to a bird called '*baiga*'.

O my younger brother  
 What you say is true  
 O my younger brother  
 The knower of the tale  
 The knower of the song  
 O my own younger brother  
 The knower of usage  
 O my younger brother  
 I am an ignorant man  
 I do not know a thing  
 A story, a story say you  
 Tell me a story you say  
 O my younger brother  
 Listen then with big ears  
 O my own younger brother  
 Lend an ear  
 "A *baiga*, a *baiga*" say you  
 Do you know who the *baiga* bird is  
 O my own younger brother  
 Tell me the name of the *baiga* bird  
 O my own younger brother  
 Real is the *baiga* bird, and alive  
 O my own younger brother  
 The *baiga* made by Bhagvan  
 O my own younger brother.

## IV

In the following riddle, the inseparable pair of Life and Death is discussed.

O my own younger brother  
 What you say is true  
 Relate again  
 O my own younger brother  
 The sister-tale of the former one  
 O my own younger brother

The pair you talk of  
 O my own younger brother  
 Who are the pair ?  
 Tell me the name of the pair  
 O my own younger brother  
 The name is not found in the upper world  
 It is in this world  
 O my own younger brother  
 Tell its name  
 Describe it  
 O my own younger brother  
 All things make pairs  
 O my own younger brother  
 The pair break up  
 O my own younger brother  
 The broken pair unite  
 Where is the pair now ?  
 O my own younger brother  
 Tell the pair  
 O my own younger brother  
 Who are the pair ?

## V

Four-sided is the earth  
 O my own younger brother  
 Above it is the upper world  
 We do not know the upper world  
 We do not know the nether world  
 It is in *singal dipa*  
 Which side lies the way to it  
 O real younger brother  
 Tell me the way  
 I shall go there and find it out  
 O my own younger brother  
 The *baiga* is living  
 O my own younger brother  
 It is not the *baiga*  
 O my own younger brother

## VI

## CONCLUSION

The riddles of death form a unique feature of the primitive folk-lore of the Central Provinces. Though they deal with death there is no trace of fear and tragic emotion about them. Death is sudden and baffling, but Life is larger than Death. 'All roads of glory lead but to the grave,' says the English poet. 'Death may take away. But there is nothing that life does not heal, restore and beautify,' says the aboriginal thinker.

## TO CONTRIBUTORS

Great trouble is caused to the Editors by the failure of contributors to prepare their typescripts properly for the press. In one short article of 12 pages recently received there were no fewer than 141 points requiring correction ; in another there were 63—both these papers were by responsible scholars. These corrections have to be made by someone : if they are left to be made in proof, there is waste of time and additional expense. Titles of books are often incorrectly given and the need of verifying these will be appreciated if readers will glance through the following list (taken from recent contributions) and see without referring to a library if they can say offhand in how many places an Editor would have to correct it before he sent it to the printer.

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| R. B. Russell,   | <i>Tribes and Castes of Central Provinces of India</i> |
| E. Thurston,     | <i>Tribes and Castes of South India</i>                |
| S. C. Roy,       | <i>The Khariyas</i>                                    |
| H. Whithead,     | <i>Village Deities of Southern India</i>               |
| G. Slater,       | <i>South Indian Villages</i>                           |
| L. K. A. Iyer,   | <i>The Tribes and Castes of Mysore</i>                 |
| T. C. Hodson,    | <i>The Naga Tribes of Assam</i>                        |
| H. H. Risley,    | <i>Castes and Tribes of Bengal.</i>                    |
| D. N. Mazumdar,  | <i>A People in Transition</i>                          |
| O. R. Erhenfels, | <i>Mother Right in India</i>                           |

In these 10 titles there are 15 errors.

The Editors therefore have decided to propose the following rules for the consideration of contributors.

Papers offered for publication should be completely ready as copy for the printer, typewritten on one side of each sheet and prepared in accordance with the following suggestions.

Spelling and punctuation should follow the principles laid down in Fowler's *Modern English Usage* and the O. E. D.

Special attention is drawn to the following small details with regard to which there is much confusion and inconsistency.

1. References to literature should be standardized as follows : author's name and initials, comma, title of book underlined, place and (comma) date of publication in brackets, comma, volume (if any) abbreviated and with a capital and stop, number of volume in roman figures, comma, p. or pp. for page or pages, followed by the page number in ordinary figures and f or ff (not seq.) if necessary, full stop. Thus, E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of*

*Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 63. Or again, E. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras, 1909), Vol. VI, pp. 33 f. Place of publication, but not ordinarily the name of the publisher, should be given.

2. Subsequent references in the same article should be made by giving the author's name, comma, op. cit., comma, volume and page. Thus, Dalton, op. cit., p. 72 or Thurston, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 30. If the references follow immediately, put *ibid.*, p. 6. The latest use is to print *ibid* with a small initial letter and in roman even at the beginning of a line.

3. Footnotes should be indicated by numbers, not by stars or other signs. There is no need to write "Footnote No. 1." etc.

4. References to journals should be made as follows: author's name and initials, comma, title of article in single quotes, comma, abbreviated name of periodical underlined, comma, volume, date in brackets, page. Abbreviations should be written with stops between each letter, thus *J. A. O. S.* But *Man*, *Man in India*, *Anthropos* and other short titles should be given in full.

Thus, H. J. Fleure, 'Racial Evolution and Archaeology,' *J. R. A. I.*, Vol. LXVII (1937), pp. 206 f.

5. Sub-divisions of an article should be distinguished by roman figures.

6. All quotations should be in single quotes and quotations within quotations in double quotes.

7. The hyphen should be omitted in words like today, tomorrow, grandson, grandmother.

8. It should be retained in expressions which are still in two parts: folk-songs, folk-tales. The journal of the Folk-Lore Society is spelt *Folk-Lore*.

9. Words like civilization and others deriving ultimately from the Greek—izo should be spelt with a z not an s. The few exceptions (such as advertise, exercise, surprise) are given by Fowler, p. 300.

10. The point should be omitted from abbreviations like Dr, Mr, Mrs and the stop from the end of all titles, sub-headings, and authors' names when they are used as signatures. Professor should be spelt out in full.

11. Dates should always be given in the same style and written thus: 6 December 1943, 30 January 1820.

12. Compound numbers should be written as follows :

16-17 but 26-7,  
1940-41 but 1942-3,  
106-7 but 111-12 and 121-2.

English is not a phonetic language nor does the roman character (except in French) lend itself to accentuation, still less to diacritical marks. Accents and other marks should never be put on words printed in roman type. As for italicized words, the Editors do not feel there is sufficient agreement among scholars for them to insist on a uniform scheme, but they recommend that, except in linguistic articles, original words and expressions should be used sparingly and italics employed as little as possible. A word is a symbol; it is neither a guide to pronunciation, nor an epitomized essay in linguistics. It is greatly to be hoped that some day a convention will be established for the simplest possible way of writing Indian words in English, in all cases except where special attention is being drawn to linguistic usage.

## REVIEWS

BHARATI SARABHAI, *The Well of the People* (Visva-Bharati, 1943).

In the life of village India, the well acts as a focus for a great variety of feelings. It is the social centre where women meet and gossip. It is a trysting place for lovers. In village poems it is a sexual image of power and charm. Above all, by the life-giving qualities of its water it symbolises all the sources of vitality without which no village can exist.

In her poem *The Well of the People* Miss Bharati Sarabhai uses this public image but gives it a new and private significance. Her poem is concerned with the conflict of forces in modern India. The forces of the present are at war with the traditions of the village. The first would rouse India from a torpor while the second would keep her as she is. 'There love is filling her pitcher from the well yet she has no rope wherewith to draw water.' Through this quotation from Kabir, Miss Sarabhai points to the meaning of her poem. *The Well of the People* expresses the frustration of those whose passion for their country would lead them to evoke its energies but who are baffled by the circumstances of their time.

The poem is in the form of a charade. Three young national workers—Chetan, Sanatan, and Vichitra—are watching the pilgrims gathering by the Ganges at Haridwar. They marvel at the fascination which the pilgrim centre exerts and the complete absorption of the pilgrims in their religious way of life. Among the pilgrims they notice an old woman.

'She has faith, you have youth. I too was young  
As you are young but having no faith was only young'.

They comment on the dangers of the journey, the deaths from cholera and finally on its complete and desolating futility.

The scene then shifts to a village in Mithila. Chetan, Sanatan and Vichitra are standing in a village hut in which the clean, neat and useful arrangement of everything is an essential element. They are then confronted with a band of peasants who accuse them of belonging to an exploiting class. Chetan in reply damns the slowness of their anger, their lack of discontent and their religious complacency. Some Gandhian village workers now enter and there follows a recitation of their function in the villages

'We brought to life extinct discoveries  
Saw instinct with future our lost industries  
Defied earthquake, the plague, the flood, the famine  
Affirmed the home, gave it occupation  
For we climbed the hill through the spinning wheel.'

At this stage the old woman re-appears and the workers relate her story.

She was married in Madhubani and when her husband died young she was dazed at his death. The workers looked for a way of reviving her

'We sought it in work  
That would not destroy her home, her bulwark  
Of love, tradition we respected; work  
Of hand perfected in blood from father's  
Father to son, from mother to daughter  
And now forgotten.'

For twenty years she works at spinning and at the end has amassed seventy rupees. She desires to go to Benares and spend it on a temple well. But no one will take her and seventy rupees is not enough. Then Gandhi comes

on his Harijan tour to Mithila, and instead of making a temple well, she decides to make a well for Harijans. The well is not yet made but the decision is taken. Through the well for the Harijans, she will reach a new Benares.

The woman falls and the poem closes on a view of Haridwar and Benares while the chrous looks to the new Haridwar stirring in men's minds.

' And now you rally :

Praise God, for there are men who go not to Haridwar  
Men, godlike men they are, to whom we are as pilgrims  
Not far from Benares but one with his nearer presence  
In riots, strikes, prison, famine and floods—O how  
Great India's torrent has been turned outward from lonely  
River and mountain !

We are not alone

But know that this ecstasy, unscorching beauty must still bristle—

Desert

O Desert, it will turn on you, itself, this Beauty  
Great human prodigal till meridian it burn  
As fuel on pyre to feed the flame, new Indian flame,  
While Haridwar goes on  
Flowing immovably.'

It will be obvious that Miss Sarabhai's poem is of great importance but it is necessary that we should understand exactly why. If it were only the summary I have given, it would have its interest but the interest would be more of politics than of poetry. Its actual importance lies in the inner conflict, which is projected in the plot and which imposes its values on the characters and the action. This conflict may be summarised as follows : It is apparent that beliefs link Miss Sarabhai to the workers and that intellectually, she is in sympathy with their role. But she is even more aware of their inadequacy as agents and persons and all her writing shows them as alien and artificial. In a line such as "And we climbed the hill through the spinning-wheel"—the jauntiness of the rhythm shows only too clearly the shallowness of the function. At the same time, although she is intellectually impatient with the people, emotionally she has nothing but reverence and love for them, and indeed the most lyrical, passages in the poem are those which describe the crowds of women and the scenes at the river

' Young mothers from Punjab, with what life-joy we know not,  
have sat on the road  
in absent mood. Caught  
like pitchers down-necked  
emptying emptying their breast to sons velvet-waisted  
Who sated, fasten their mother boddice'

' Here, after the shut-in cold of the fierce mountain  
is the piercing thrill  
of the outside moon ;'

The result, therefore, is that as a poet Miss Sarabhai rejects the forces of which she intellectually approves and again as a poet, she accepts the persons whom she intellectually rejects. It is because this conflict with all its frustration goes to the heart of the present situation that *The Well of the People* is of such compelling validity for our time.



Cecil Day Lewis said 'It is always dangerous and impertinent to commend a poem for anything but its poetry.' *The Well of the People* is a political parable but it is a great deal more than that. Through her rhythms and images, Bharati Sarabhai shows herself to be a new poet in English. It is true that without Eliot and Auden, *The Well of the People* could never have been written. But that is true of all other poems that are being written today. What distinguishes Miss Sarabhai is that she has completely absorbed her influences and has achieved a new style which is at once contemporary in its idiom and a valid expression of her sensibility. Her verse is English, contemporary and original in a way in which no verse of any other Indian poet in India has so far been. *The Well of the People* is a poem which by its authentic and original style gives Bharati Sarabhai an immediate position in English writing.

W. G. A.

**VARNA-RATNAKARA.** Edited by Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Babua Misra (Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1940).

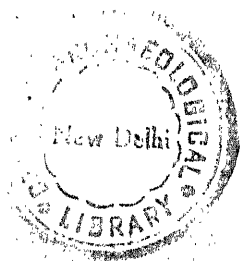
DURING the last ten years there has been a growing realisation of the importance of Maithili as a major language of Bihar. Not only is it the domestic language of a large part of Tirhut but it is also the vehicle of a continuous cultural tradition. This tradition was given form by Maithil scholars and poets and as a result of the search for Maithil texts which started in the twentieth century we can now see the stages by which Maithil thought and poetry developed.

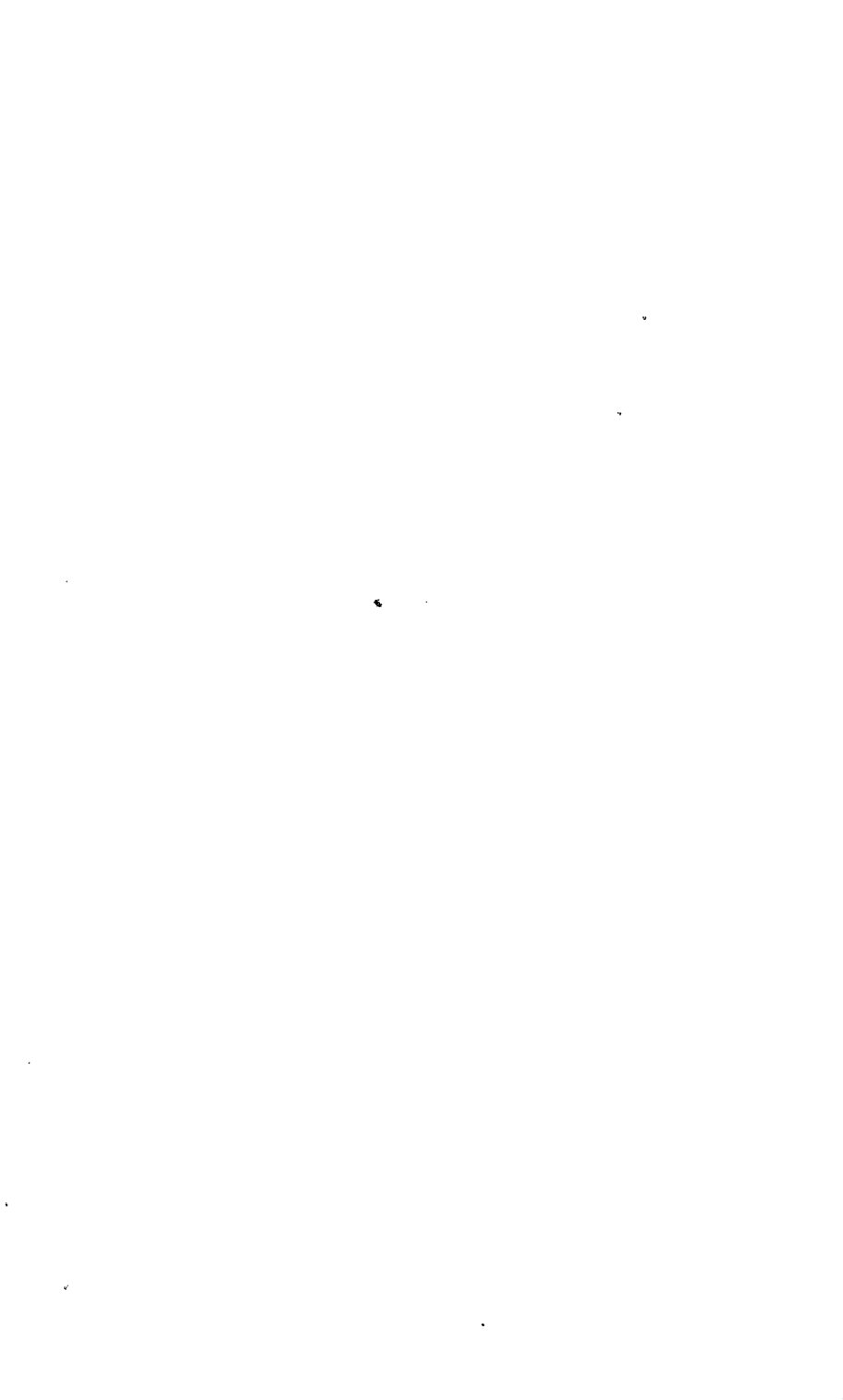
The *Varna-Ratnakara* which has been printed through the enterprise of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal is the oldest Maithil text and dates from the first half of the 14th century. The book is a lexicon of poetic topics and gives a series of poetic conventions. As a poet's handbook, it must almost certainly have influenced Vidyapathi. Its publication under the careful editorship of Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Mr Babua Misra is a landmark in the preservation of Maithili culture.

**RAMIQBAL SINGH 'Rakesh.'** Maithili Lokgit (Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Benares, 1943).

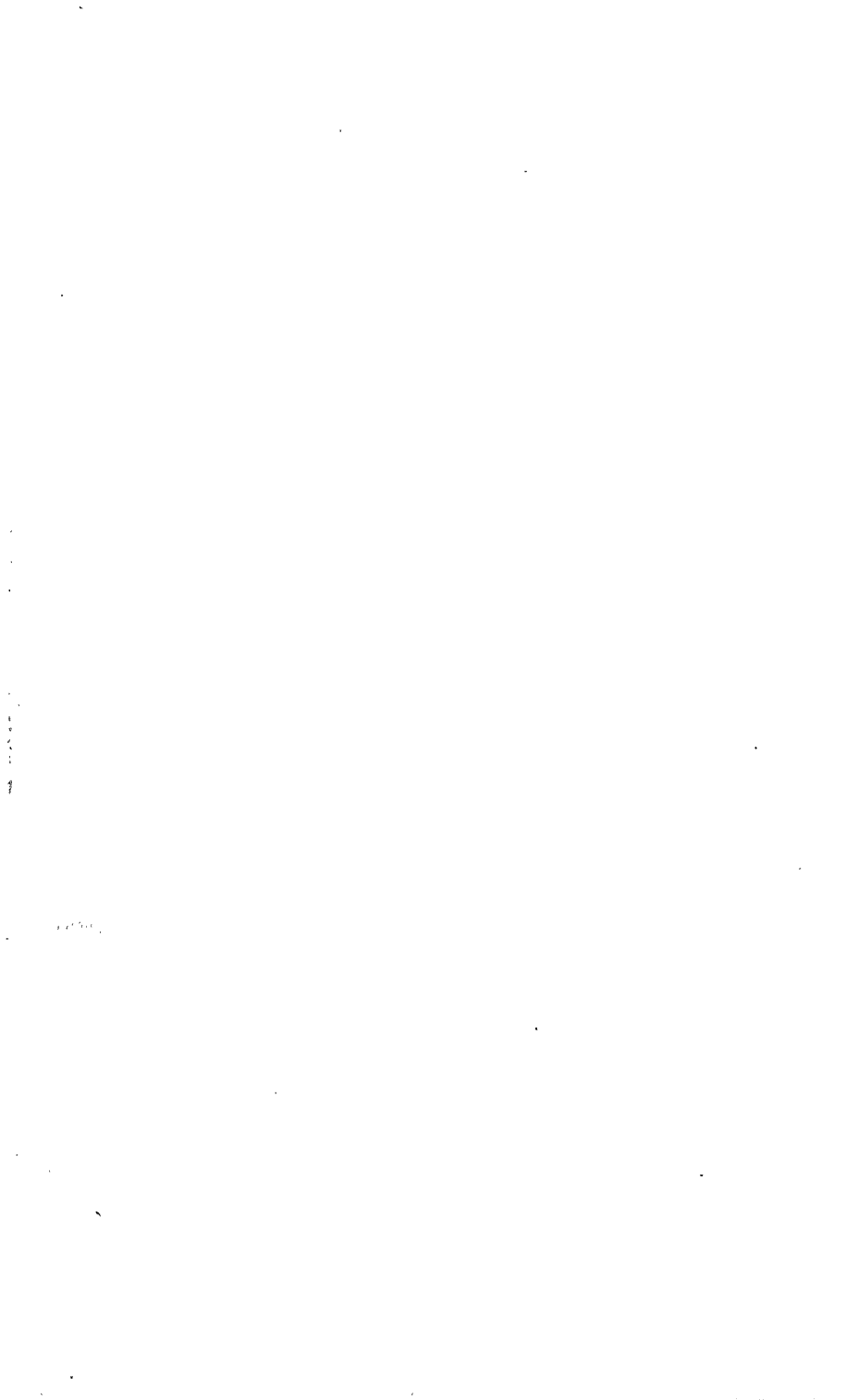
THIS collection of Maithili folk-songs is a pioneer work of the greatest importance. The songs are grouped according to festivals and ritual occasions and each song is accompanied by a Hindi paraphrase. The book is thus not only a scholar's text but a book for the general reader. This collection will go far to preserve the oral poetry of Mithila and the roots of Hindi poetry.

W. G. A.











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